

University of Dundee

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Individuals and society in transition

a narrative study of parents' use of smacking

Redman, Susan

Award date:
2010

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Individuals and society in transition

a narrative study of parents' use of smacking

Susan Redman

2010

University of Dundee

Conditions for Use and Duplication

Copyright of this work belongs to the author unless otherwise identified in the body of the thesis. It is permitted to use and duplicate this work only for personal and non-commercial research, study or criticism/review. You must obtain prior written consent from the author for any other use. Any quotation from this thesis must be acknowledged using the normal academic conventions. It is not permitted to supply the whole or part of this thesis to any other person or to post the same on any website or other online location without the prior written consent of the author. Contact the Discovery team (discovery@dundee.ac.uk) with any queries about the use or acknowledgement of this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My supervisors, Professor Julie Taylor and Dr. Joanne Corlett have been endlessly patient in supporting me through my long journey as a part time PhD student. They have enabled me to explore freely new methodological and theoretical challenges while at the same time helping me to remain focused on the study. Dr. Alexandra Charnock-Green and Dr Marcus Themessel-Huber, supervisors in the early stages of my studies, also gave me invaluable insights into thinking and writing about things in ways I had not previously considered.

I wish to thank my colleagues Alison O'Donnell and Audrey Mears who have helped to proof read the work. Other colleagues and fellow postgraduate students have been invaluable in their willingness to ask difficult questions of the study and have provided a much needed sounding board for discussion.

Many thanks to colleagues who have supported me by taking on some of my work load at critical times during my study periods and to my employers for enabling me to have this opportunity to develop research skills.

Finally, thanks to my family for giving me their never-ending support and encouragement.

DECLARATION

THESIS TITLE: Individuals and Society in Transition: A Narrative Study of Parents' Use of Smacking.

I Susan Redman, declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. I have consulted all of the references cited in this thesis personally. The work, of which this thesis is a record, has been conducted entirely by me and has not been previously submitted or accepted for a higher degree.

Susan Redman
OCTOBER 10th 2010

Susan Redman
School of Nursing and Midwifery
University of Dundee
Forth Avenue
Kirkcaldy
KY25YS

01382 385943

ABSTRACT

INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY IN TRANSITION: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF PARENTS' USE OF SMACKING.

Parents' use of smacking has been the subject of much private and public debate within the UK in recent years. Within this qualitative study, narrative methods were used to explore relationships between societal change and individuals' own biographical narratives of growing up and becoming parents and for some, becoming health visitors.

Initially print media texts that spanned the past twenty years were analysed to discover the dominant 'storylines' about parents' use of smacking. Secondly, narrative interviews were carried out with parents, grandparents and health visitors (most of whom were also parents or grandparents). The approach to analysis was sequential and narratives were considered in terms of their form and their content, across all of the narrative data and then within six selected narrative exemplars.

The stories recounted by participants are about 'transition' and the formation of new identities within a society that could be described as being in a 'state of flux', as the children's rights agenda is interpreted and played out in different ways. Identification of personal turning points during the life course and the use of Frank's (1995) narrative types has allowed further understanding of the ways in which these stories are culturally constructed.

At the heart of this study 'small' stories' of individual experience are set within the context of what Tilly (1984) referred to as 'big structures and large processes'. This thesis weaves ideas about social and cultural narratives with the personal or autobiographical narrative and explores their interconnectedness, places of convergence and divergence and significance for self-identity.

Participants' biographical narratives of chaos, quest and restitution, which focus upon experience of parental use of smacking over the lifecourse, illustrate ways in which different experience of transition, triggers, turning points and evolution, work in a transformational way to reconstruct moral identity of parents and foster relationships of reciprocity amongst children and parents. Participants' narratives characterised by the idea of preservation, instead emphasised continuity with the past and the preservation of the kinds of relationship enjoyed by parents and children of previous generations. The different experiences of transition have implications for understandings of relationship between adults and children and for the cultural politics of childhood, which are significant for the present and on into the future. It is this very notion of reciprocity amongst children and parents that is likely to foster as cultural knowledge, equal protection against assault.

CHAPTER ONE

PREFACE AND THESIS OVERVIEW

Issues about the use of physical punishment by parents continue to be debated in both public and political arenas and are therefore of interest to health and social care professionals, policy makers, social researchers and parents themselves.

During the past decade issues about smacking along with other aspects of parenting have captured the interest of television and radio producers and their audiences. Indeed, during the course of this study the smacking debate was the focus of a controversial Independent Television documentary, 'I Smack and I'm Proud' (ITV, 2006). Issues about the use of smacking are also featured in the television series, 'Supernanny', which at the time of writing is in its sixth series (Channel 4, 2009). Questions about the social positioning of children in relation to normative beliefs and behaviour about parents use of smacking were included in two BBC Radio 4 series, 'The Invention of Childhood' (2006) and 'Bringing up Britain' (2008). A brief look at the internet 'blogs' that were associated with the programmes indicated that audiences have strongly held and diverse views about parents use of smacking in contemporary society.

For some time it has been a criminal offence to hit or slap one's partner, neighbour or an older relative, but within the United Kingdom (UK) legal system the law regarding children is somewhat different. Both the UK parliament at Westminster in 2004 and the Scottish Executive in 2003 passed laws that banned the use of implements to discipline children (Department for Education

and Skills 2004, Scottish Executive 2003). The laws also state that children should not be hit around the head and should not be smacked if this is likely to result in injury, such as marking the skin. In 2002 the Scottish Executive proposed the introduction of a new law banning the smacking of children under the age of three. This proposal was abandoned in favour of the current legislation, the Criminal Justice Act (Scotland) 2003, that introduced the idea of 'justifiable assault' (Scottish Executive 2003). Although it can be argued that this legislation goes some way towards protecting children, its ambiguity may leave both parents and healthcare professionals in confusion (Taylor and Redman 2004).

What have been considered legitimate forms of discipline towards children have changed over time in the UK. For example, prior to legislation in 1986 that banned corporal punishment in state schools, the use of the cane, slipper and belt and in Scotland the tawse (a leather belt cut into fingers at one end) were used regularly to discipline unruly children. In a Scottish survey (Scottish Law Commission 1992) 83% of respondents thought it should be lawful to smack a naughty three year-old with an open hand in such a way as not to cause lasting injury. According to Nobes and Smith (1997), most British parents (about 75%) use physical discipline on their children. More recently, findings from a study commissioned by the Scottish Executive in 2002, indicate that the use of physical punishment by parents within the home has continued to be fairly widespread. For example, fifty one percent of parents stated that they had used physical punishment within the previous year. Amongst parents of children aged three to five years, this figure rose to seventy seven percent. Around twenty

percent of parents of children below five years of age, said that they had used physical punishment during the past week.

This Scottish study also reported upon intergenerational change and continuity in relation to disciplining behaviours. Although participants perceived the use of physical discipline to be less severe than it was in the past, according to their own childhood experiences, there were also continuities when their own approaches to discipline were compared to that of their parents. Despite a decline in the use and severity in the use of physical discipline in Scotland, the study suggests that smacking continues to be a normative aspect of parenting behaviour (Anderson, Murray and Brownlie 2002). Similar findings have been reported on the use of physical punishment by parents in England and Wales (Department for Children Schools and Families 2007) and in Northern Ireland (Bunting, Webb and Healy 2008).

These changes are not restricted to the UK. In June 2006, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that giving children equal protection from assault is 'an immediate and unqualified obligation' under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, globally only 24 states have given children equal protection against assault as adults. All Scandinavian countries are included in this, the earliest being Sweden where the use of physical punishment by parents was banned in 1979. This seems to have resulted in a change in social attitudes amongst parents about the use of smacking to such an extent that it has become a socially unacceptable practice (Durrant 2000).

Other states that have subscribed to such a ban include a number of European and South American countries such as Germany, Latvia, Cyprus, Romania, Hungary, Uruguay and Venezuela and most recently in 2008, Costa Rica and the Republic of Moldova. Although the Welsh Assembly favour a ban on smacking, the government at Westminster has not supported this. As indicated in Table One, the Scottish Government has not supported a total ban on parents' use of smacking. As in the UK, none of the states in the USA have issued a total ban on the use of corporal punishment, although many have banned its use in schools (Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance 2009). Interestingly, when respondents to the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) World Perspectives Survey 2008, were asked to comment upon behaviours that within their country were classed as child abuse, only fifty percent reported that physical discipline (severity unspecified) was considered to be abusive (ISPCAN 2008). This suggests that the use of physical discipline on children remains a normative practice within many countries. Additionally, despite the development of a professional framework for safeguarding children, the Royal College of Nursing did not join the Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance until 2009 (RCN 2009). Support for a ban on the use of smacking by parents had previously been unsuccessful at RCN conferences in 2006 and 2007.

The following timeline indicates some of the key dates in the recent history of the use of physical punishment. Apart from the first date, 1860, the others represent key dates that correspond with the time frame of the lives of participants of this study. Chief Justice Cockburn's pronouncement has been included because it captures the idea that both parents and the courts

understand what seem to be ambiguous terms, moderate and reasonable punishment.

Table One: Timeline: Physical punishment in the UK

1860	• "By the law of England, a parent ...may for the purpose of correcting evil in the child, inflict moderate and reasonable corporal punishment" (Chief Justice Cockburn, see Roberts 2000)
1969	• The Criminal Justice Act prohibited use of corporal punishment as a sentence by the courts.
1986	• Corporal punishment prohibited in all state schools.
1989	• EPOCH: End the Physical Punishment of Children founded in the UK by Peter Newell and Dr Penelope Leach.
1995	• United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended all corporal punishment used within the family should be prohibited in the UK.
1998	• Corporal punishment (CP) prohibited in private schools in England and Wales. • European Court of Human Rights found stepfather's beating of a boy with a garden cane, in breach of the boy's human rights. The UK's defense was that of 'reasonable chastisement'.
2000	• Corporal punishment abolished in private schools in Scotland.
2001	• End All Physical Punishment of Children, a global initiative launched.
2002	• Prohibition of the use of CP by child minders and in day nurseries in Scotland. • United Nations Committee on Economy, Social and Cultural Affairs, announced regret that the UK continued to use the defence of 'reasonable chastisement'.
2003	• CP in English and Welsh day nurseries prohibited. • Concept of 'justifiable assault' introduced (Section 51 Criminal Justice Scotland Act).
2004	• England and Wales: Section 58 Children's Act amended Parents allowed to justify common assault of their children as reasonable punishment, but this defence being cannot be used in more serious assault charges.
2006	• The UK government rejected the plea from all four Children's Commissioners for complete prohibition of corporal punishment. • Northern Ireland amended the law on 'reasonable punishment', bringing in line with that of England and Wales.
2008	• The UNCRC urged UK governments to prioritise prohibition of all CP and to repeal the defense of 'justifiable assault'.

(Information extrapolated from Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance (2009))

This timeline indicates that almost one hundred and fifty years on since Chief Justice Cockburn's pronouncement, the notion of reasonable punishment or the more recent amendment in Scotland to 'justifiable assault', has pervaded UK legislation on the use of physical punishment by parents and this arguably is

one of the key reasons why smacking has been accepted as an appropriate way to discipline children in the middle and late twentieth century and on into the twenty-first century.

This brief history of the use of physical punishment in the UK along with data that reflects the global position on parental use of smacking was presented in this preface in order to contextualise this study. It suggests that it is a complex issue and that the use of smacking within the UK is a deeply embedded social phenomenon.

According to Newell (2006) the current legislative position has resulted in a paradoxical situation wherein the most vulnerable in our society, children, are not afforded the same protection (in law) from assault as adults. The underlying philosophy that supports this view seems simply to be that children are different to adults, not yet people, but becoming (James and Prout 1997, Mayall 1998, Brownlie 2006). Ideas about the social positioning of children are crucial to understanding how the use of smacking and other forms of physical punishment have become a social phenomenon within society in the UK. It is this stance that is at the heart of this study and is the theoretical position that has been adopted to make meaning of the study findings.

The idea that breaching a child's human dignity and physical integrity is acceptable, normal or even as some still suggest in their best interests, perpetuates children's status as objects or property (Newell 2006).

My interest in this subject dates back to my experience as a newly qualified health visitor. The following episode is a personal narrative that is included here

by way of illustration and also to help to make clear my own position. Additionally, it is intended that the inclusion of this personal story helps in some way to bring equity and reflexivity to the study. I had felt an overwhelming sense of privilege in my position as interviewer, as participants shared with me their very personal accounts of family life. The inclusion of one of my own stories is for me a way of balancing the relationship between the researcher and the participant.

Being a Health Visitor

Sometime towards the end of the 1980s, as a newly qualified health visitor I clearly remember visiting a mother and her young son who was around two years of age. He started to behave in a way that his mother found unacceptable. I was astounded to hear her say, 'don't do that, or the health visitor will give you a good smack'. I explained that I certainly would not smack him and that we could discuss more positive approaches that might be more effective. Her response was, 'your predecessor [recently retired] used to take him across her knee and it always worked'.

Reflecting upon this event later, a number of issues were striking. Firstly, that this mother found the use of physical punishment acceptable; secondly, that she regarded this 'policing' of children to be a legitimate role for health visitors and that this somehow supported her parenting practice. Both my predecessor's practice and this mother's understanding of my role conflicted with the way that I saw myself in my role as a health visitor. My own beliefs were informed in part by involvement with pressure groups such as EPOCH (End the Physical Punishment of Children) who were active campaigners for a

change in legislature to completely ban smacking at the time. My predecessor's health visiting experience had taken place during a time when the use of smacking by parents and teachers was normative and lawful.

It was this event that influenced my interest in exploring mechanisms for change in society's norms and values over time, and how individuals may make sense of changing definitions of smacking in relation to their own parenting practice. My personal position on smacking children at the commencement of this study was in accordance with my previous beliefs as a health visitor as stated, however, my own position was challenged as I reflected upon the stories told me by participants in my study. The idea that participants have power to challenge the views of the researcher is elaborated upon further in relation to discussion about the relationship of the researcher and the researched in the methodology chapter of this doctoral thesis.

Prior to commencement of this study, a preliminary review of the literature on parents' use of physical punishment was conducted. The aim of this was to identify and to clarify arguments for and against the use of smacking by parents in the UK. Diverse views of both psychologists and nurses formed the basis of the arguments that were presented in a subsequent paper (Taylor and Redman 2004, see Appendix 1) and that in turn informed the beginnings of a research proposal. These arguments, underpinned by research findings from the field of psychology, did not indicate conclusively that smacking was harmful to children. Conversely, findings from psychological research seemed to be somewhat contradictory. However, broader or more fundamental questions about the social construction of the phenomenon of smacking by parents were not within

the scope of that paper and instead constitute the research question and aims of this doctoral study.

How do parents', grandparents' and health visitors' narratives diverge or converge with changing societal narratives about the use of smacking by parents in the UK?

The aims of this doctoral study are to discover:

- How the print media contribute to societal discourse about parents' use of smacking.
- The contexts of parents' and grandparents' understandings of smacking within the framework of biographical narrative.
- How concepts of generation, reciprocity and relationship are played out within families in Scotland.
- How health visitors make sense of smacking as professional caregivers and health promoters and also from their more personal perspective as parents or grandparents.

THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Physical Punishment of Children in Context

The literature review provides a rationale for the development of my research question. It commences with discussion of the contribution of psychological research to definitions of smacking. The findings from psychological research studies revealed gaps in understandings about smacking as a cultural phenomenon and its relationship to the way in which ideas about what constitutes childhood and the social position of children in society. Review of sociological literature on smacking sheds light upon the way in which the social construction of childhood is inextricably linked to the socially embedded nature of smacking, the actual practice of smacking by parents, the beliefs and practice of health visitors and policy making.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of the methodology chapter is to provide a theoretical and philosophical foundation for the study design and methods used. The study is in two parts: In part one of the study, the way in which the media has represented smacking is explored. In part two of the study, parents', grandparents' and health visitors' narratives about their experience of smacking is explored. This chapter outlines the two parts of the study and the different stages of the research process; selection of print media articles, recruitment and selection of participants, generating data through narrative interviews, analysis of print media texts, sequential analysis of narrative interviews and interpretation of the findings. Methodological issues that relate to the position of the researcher as

writer, issues related to reflexivity, ethical issues and measuring 'goodness' in qualitative research are also discussed within this chapter.

Chapter Four: Representation of smacking in the print media.

In Part One of this study, print media representation of parents' use of smacking is explored in order to provide an understanding of what might be the social 'backdrop' or milieu for the second part of the study. In other words, to shed a glimpse of light upon one aspect of the social world inhabited by study participants and to discover the discourse that was generated by the print media during the lifecourse of study participants. Although some comparisons can be made between the themes found within print media texts and participants' narratives, this was not the main purpose of this part of the study; it is instead a window into the social world.

Chapter Five: Production and Performance of a Life Story

Chapter Five is the first of three chapters that form Part Two of the study: a narrative study of the lives of parents, grandparents and health visitors (most of whom were parents or grandparents). The focus of chapter five is to present an interpretation of the findings from narrative interviews in terms of their form, the way that the talk was produced and performed. Structural aspects of the interviews, such as the way in which language contributed to definitions of smacking are demonstrated with illustrations from participants' narratives. Smacking was defined in two ways; as an act of violence, or as an appropriate form of parental discipline.

Additionally, the construction of narrative as a dialogical process between narrator and researcher is considered in relation to the interview technique. As a result of analysing the narrative interviews in terms of their form, the concept of transition within the lives of participants began to evolve as a possible framework for analysing the content of the narratives.

Chapter Six: Thematic Content of Narratives

Within chapter six, the concept of transition is used to provide a framework for analysis of all participants' narratives; developmental transitions from childhood to parenthood and for some participants a response to their role as health visitors. Within the role as parents, participants described experiences of transition that intersect with issues about moral self-identity, relationship and memory.

Chapter Seven: Narrative Exemplars: Lives in Transition

Within this chapter, six participants' narratives that most clearly illustrate the narrative threads discovered by thematic analysis of content are discussed at a deeper level. Some of the quotations that were used previously to illustrate specific narrative threads are recontextualised within the narrative in its entirety. Frank's (1995) typology of transition, Chaos, Quest and Restitution was used as a 'listening device', which allowed a deeper understanding of how participants made sense of their experience and how these small stories of ordinary lives take place within the context of changing wider social processes.

Chapter Eight: Big Structures, Large Processes and Small Stories

In this chapter, findings from the different parts of this study are synthesised and what have emerged as key issues for narrative methodologies are discussed. The first part of this chapter focuses upon relationships between societal discourse, collective memory and the individual. This is followed by a discussion of apparent contradiction within narrative accounts and points of tension that exist between the personal narrative and the socially constructed narrative about the nature of smacking.

The significance of O'Neill's (1995) covenant theory, which includes the principles of recognition and reciprocity, for participants' narratives is discussed.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications for Policy and Practice

This concluding chapter begins by summarising the aims of the study and how these were met. Strengths and limitations to the study are highlighted along with possible Implications of findings for further research, policy and clinical practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for contemporary policy and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN CONCEPTUALISED

2:1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is upon parents' use of smacking rather than other more serious forms of physical punishment, as it is here that there seems to be greater controversy and more disparate views amongst parents and health care professionals (Elliman and Lynch 2000, Taylor and Redman 2004). This controversy is also evident in the print media reportage that is discussed later in Chapter Four.

The purpose of this chapter is to distil the different ways that smacking is conceptualised. Although dictionary meanings of 'defining' and 'conceptualising' are similar, I have made an important distinction between the two. Within this chapter, definitions of smacking are offered that describe the act of smacking, however, understandings of smacking are much more complex than this. The way that smacking is conceptualised by psychologists, sociologists and within health and social care, has important implications for beliefs about policy and practice; what should happen. For example, smacking may be conceptualised as a human rights issue, or in terms of its efficacy or potential to do harm and intersects with ideas about the subordinate social position of children in relation to that of adults.

Although there appear to be a growing number of parents, health care professionals and child and family focused organisations within the UK that support a ban on the use of smacking by parents (Powell 2002), arguments for and against the parental use of smacking have continued to be debated within academic literature and within grey literature sources such as print media and parenting magazines.

A review of the literature that relates to the use of smacking by parents in the United Kingdom was conducted at the commencement of this doctoral study, and was an ongoing process. Initially the literature review informed the development of the research questions and refinement of the aims of the study. Subsequently, by working iteratively with the literature, ideas about methodology and interpretation of the study findings were crystallised.

Although the term 'smacking' is used widely in the UK other terms are used elsewhere in the world; 'spanking' and 'paddling' are used in the United States of America (USA), for instance. For the purpose of this thesis, in accordance with previously accepted definitions (Baumrind 1997 & Consensus Statements 1996) the term smacking is used to describe hitting with the palm of the hand anywhere on the body as a form of discipline and where the intention is not to cause physical injury.

The aim of this scoping literature review (Arskey and O'Malley 2005) was to discover what is known about how smacking is defined and conceptualised and how present day beliefs and attitudes about parents' use of smacking have been constructed. This literature review seeks to present a broad picture of the

key issues and the extent to which there are important gaps that require further research.

Literature searches were conducted within electronic databases of nursing and medical literature (CINAHL and SCOPUS) and from within the disciplines of psychology, anthropology and sociology (PSYCHLIT and ASSIA). Additionally, hand searches in local academic libraries were conducted. Literature that had been published within the past fifteen years was included for review. Empirical primary research papers, systematic reviews, professional opinion papers and papers that sought to present new theoretical positions about issues that were related to parents' use of non-abusive physical punishment were included. Non-English language papers were excluded for pragmatic reasons.

The literature search was facilitated by the use of monthly 'literature alerts' within database systems such as 'Zetoc' (Manchester Information and Associated Services), and those that are provided by the major publishing houses. A number of different search terms were used and refined by using Boolean operators. Search terms included: smacking, spanking, physical punishment, corporal punishment, culture, children, parents, health visitor, children's rights.

Literature searches identified a vast array of academic and grey literature that explored the smacking phenomenon from a number of different disciplinary and methodological perspectives. As Hart (1998) suggests, like many novice researchers I found the task of deciding how to organise the literature review a daunting one; on account of the amount of literature that the searches identified.

There are a number of different ways of organising a review of the literature (Hart 1998). For the sake of clarity and identification of the distinct threads that are woven throughout this thesis, the literature review is organised by content or key issues according to different ways that smacking is conceptualised. The literature falls in to three main categories, though since disciplinary boundaries are often blurred, (for example, nursing draws upon psychological and sociological theory to support arguments) there is some overlap:

1. Concepts of smacking that are derived from empirical psychological research. This category of literature includes discussion of findings that offer conclusions about possible long term and short-term effects of smacking for children.
2. Cultural and sociological concepts of smacking. Within this category of literature, a number of different themes were evident; aspects of cultural patterns of discipline and the way in which cultural products, the media, have represented smacking. Broader themes, found within the sociological literature include discussion about children's rights and the social position of children.
3. Health visitors' opinions about parents' use of smacking. Included in this category of literature is discussion about public health approaches used by health visitors, which aim to foster sensitive parenting.

From very early on in the review it became clear that there were two associated overarching concepts that link the different groups of literature and that were to provide a cohesive thread through the thesis narrative. The first of these relates to how smacking is defined or conceptualised and secondly how this has

changed over time. The reason this is considered to be fundamental to this thesis is because shared societal understandings of smacking and individuals' definitions of smacking have potential repercussions for public health policy and practice and parenting behaviour intergenerationally and intra generationally.

2:2 PROBLEMATISING DEFINITIONS OF SMACKING

One of the challenges of conducting the literature search and review was separating out papers that focused specifically upon smacking and papers that included smacking within the term 'child maltreatment'. This latter term, embraces descriptions of more serious abuse and non-injurious punishment.

Although empirical research papers about child maltreatment or abuse have been published over many decades, with the earliest work being conducted by American psychologists such as MacKinnon (1938), there were few that specifically focused upon the parental use of smacking. Comparisons between study results are problematic since severe forms of corporal punishment were often not distinguished from milder forms of punishment such as those that are less likely to cause immediate physical harm. Where child maltreatment was defined, this rarely included the non-injurious physical punishment of children that was used as a form of discipline to control or to correct. Instead, the term child maltreatment generally referred to more harmful physical, emotional or sexual abuse (Gershoff 2002). Another term that is used in the literature and one that I have adopted in this current thesis is 'normative smacking'. This term is congruent with Baumrind's (1997) definition of smacking as given previously. It is described as normative in the sense that smacking has been a usual way to

discipline children in the UK and is at present regarded as a legitimate parenting behaviour in current legislature. To clarify this further, within this thesis, I do not use the term normative to indicate a moral value that smacking is right.

Straus (1994) problematises the issue further suggesting that although the intention to harm or hurt may not be there, injury may result from over discipline and as such physical abuse could be an outcome of corporal punishment. Straus offers the following definition of corporal punishment:

Corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing pain but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child's behaviour (Straus 1994).

Although Straus' definition of physical punishment bears some similarity with that of Baumrind it is not restricted to smacking with the palm of the hand. Additionally, Straus' definition does not exclude the use of implements and is not specific regarding which part of the body is punished. Therefore Straus' definition of corporal punishment is difficult on two counts. Firstly, use of this definition in research does not allow different forms of physical punishments and outcomes to be determined when comparing research findings. Secondly, such a definition of corporal punishment is problematic in that it is not congruent with policy in the UK, since the use of implements and hitting around the head and shaking a child are considered to be abusive forms of punishment within current law.

According to Gershoff (2002) many researchers in the field of child abuse,

including Straus, regard corporal punishment as a violent act that is on a continuum with child abuse and therefore do not distinguish between this and milder forms of punishment such as smacking in their reports. This is a perspective shared by the Health Select Committee's (2003) Report on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. Its stark recommendations, that smacking should be made illegal to protect children from abuse, is based upon the biographical narrative of Victoria Climbié that seemed to suggest what had begun as physical punishment escalated to abuse with the most devastating consequences.

A possible explanation as to why the more recent literature makes clearer distinctions between 'ordinary or normative' corporal punishment such as smacking and physical abuse is that it is only in more recent times (since the 1990s in the UK), that the legitimacy of parents' use of smacking within the family has been questioned within parliamentary or government debate at national and international levels. The academic literature serves both to inform this debate and to contextualise the smacking phenomenon within sociological and psychological theoretical frameworks. This topic, often regarded as simply part of the 'everyday' has growing significance for research and a burgeoning literature from the 1990s onwards.

Having drawn attention to difficulties in distinguishing between smacking and other form of corporal punishment within research papers, in the following sections of this chapter, findings from within the three main categories of literature are discussed.

2:3 CONCEPTUALISING SMACKING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

A number of Issues about smacking have been raised by the public, health care professionals and researchers regarding possible associations between smacking and its long term consequences for children, and the possible relationship between parents' use of smacking and what is generally agreed to be physical abuse. A focus upon possible psychological effects of corporal punishment was a particular feature of research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. Although this literature might be considered to be dated, it is included here in this literature review as it is this literature that has provided a backdrop for more recent discussion about children's rights and policy making.

The literature search identified four extensive studies of the psychological literature published in the last twenty years, which include a systematic review, (Larzelare 2000), two meta-analyses, (Gershoff 2002 and Paolucci and Violato 2004) and a literature review, (Benjet and Kazdin 2003) about the effects of corporal punishment: The importance of these particular reviews and analyses to a discussion about parents use of smacking is supported by the number of times that they have been cited in peer reviewed literature following their publication. This is an indication of the credibility of their analyses, particularly within the discipline of psychology. Furthermore, such findings from psychological research have informed debate surrounding the use of legislation to ban all forms of corporal punishment including smacking. In relation to this doctoral study, the findings from psychological research seems to contribute to

media representation of smacking and societal understandings of the effects of smacking as discussed later in Chapter Four.

The first of these large scale systematic reviews to be published was that of Larzelare (2000). As part of his review, Larzelare evaluated thirty-eight studies that assessed the outcomes of smacking amongst young children (mean age thirteen years). These studies included eight longitudinal studies and three sequential-analysis and four randomised clinical studies that were part of a clinical research programme on behavioural parenting training intervention and studies. All of the studies included for evaluation were published between 1982 and 1997. The operational definition of corporal punishment used to determine inclusion in the review is a little ambiguous as Larzelare uses the terms non-abusive and customary physical punishment and this is of course is dependent upon the researchers opinion of what constitutes abuse and also what is customary.

2:3:1 Does Smacking Have any Long and Short Term Effects?

Finding from Larzelare's review indicate that outcomes for children are complex. All of the randomised controlled trials and the sequential analyses studies found beneficial outcomes such as reduced non-compliance and fighting. This was particularly the case when smacking (described as non-abusive) was used as a follow up to alternative and milder non physical disciplinary tactics amongst very young children aged between two and six. On the other hand, results from five out of eight longitudinal studies found less positive outcomes of smacking. Conclusions indicate that such detrimental outcomes of smacking were associated with overly frequent use. Larzelare suggests a number of

implications of the results of the study. Most importantly, smacking should not be the initial disciplinary tactic, but instead should be used to enforce milder alternative forms of discipline in younger children. The effects of using smacking to back up milder alternative forms of discipline is that the effectiveness of the milder forms of discipline should be increased rendering smacking increasingly less necessary. Furthermore, Larzelare advises that when smacking as a last resort has not been effective, then another non-abusive tactic should be tried, rather than increasing the force of the smack.

There are implications in these recommendations for parents, policy makers and health care professionals who work with families. Quite clearly parents need to be equipped with a wide ranging tool kit of non-abusive tactics to enable them to manage difficult behaviour. Implicit in Larzelare's conclusions is the notion that parents should be able to use a mild form of physical punishment such as non-injurious smacking as part of their secondary or fall back repertoire and that this should be reflected in legislation.

The results of this study present a challenge for public health practitioners, who need to be able to support families in child rearing and to enable them to make informed choices about their use of disciplinary tactics. What is not clear from Larzelare's review and what is important for public health practitioners, is how socio-economic determinants of the real world have been taken into account when analysing experimental study results. For example, if any socio-economic stressors have influenced parent's ability to make choices about the disciplinary tactic used. In other words, what else was going on in the lives of study participants during the course of the study? These questions need to be

answered before firm conclusions can be drawn about putting Larzelare's recommendations into practice.

In the second of these major studies, Gershoff (2002) examines the psychological research findings more extensively than that of the Larzelare study. Gershoff's meta analysis of the association between parent's use of corporal punishment and eleven child behaviours and experiences provides preliminary answers about how, why and for whom it may have such effects, which until the publication of her paper had been unanswered (Gershoff 2002). These behaviours include; immediate compliance, internalisation of morals, aggression, delinquency, criminality, anti-social behaviour, quality of the parent-child relationship, mental health, likelihood of abusing ones own child or partner in adulthood and becoming a victim of physical abuse.

Included in Gershoff's review were eighty-eight empirical experimental studies involving 36'309 participants. All of these studies had been conducted in either laboratory or naturalistic settings over the past sixty-two years and methodologically were informed by a positivist paradigm on the nature of truth and knowledge, a point that I shall return to in the following discussion.

Gershoff states that she believes physical abuse to be a potential outcome of corporal punishment and thereby operationally distinguishes corporal punishment from physical abuse using Straus' (1994) definition of corporal punishment. Gershoff rejected for inclusion in her review any study that included abusive techniques such as beating, kicking, biting burning or shaking in their definition of corporal punishment.

In the following section key findings from Gershoff's analysis are summarised.

Gershoff (2002) drew attention to a number of methodological concerns in attempts to establish causality between corporal punishment and potential short and long-term outcomes. For example, study methods in which the constructs of parental use of corporal punishment are measured at the same time as child behaviour and experience, stating that even when there is distance in time between the action of corporal punishment and subsequent behaviour, conclusions cannot be drawn about causation only association. Furthermore, since there are ethical issues in assigning parents and children to either smack or no smack experimental situations, studies were usually cross sectional and retrospective in design and therefore limited to parents' reports. Even in the more recent prospective studies such as that of Slade and Wissow (2004) that explored spanking in early childhood and later behaviour problems, it is not possible to conclude causation since all of the possible confounding variables cannot easily be controlled for (Gershoff 2002).

Studies included in Gershoff's review that sought to examine longer term compliance considered what Grusec and Goodnow (1994) term 'internalisation of morals' which they define as:

Taking over the values and attitudes of society as ones own, so that socially acceptable behaviour is not motivated by anticipation of external consequences, but by intrinsic or internal factors (p4).

These studies (Kuczynski and Hildebrandt 1997 for example), found that internalisation of morals is enhanced by parental discipline strategies that are not authoritarian but instead allow choice and autonomy by offering explanations. On the other hand, more power assertive methods such as

corporal punishment were found to promote children's external attributions for their behaviour. According to Grusec (1983) and Smetana (1997) the reason why the use of corporal punishment may not facilitate moral internalisation is because it does not teach the reasons for acceptable behaviour, it only teaches the desirability of not being caught.

On analysis, Gershoff found other studies that associated corporal punishment with an increased tendency for aggression, particularly amongst boys and children aged between ten and twelve years (Turner and Finkelhor 1996; Deater and Dodge 1997; Frick, Christian and Wooton 1999). These studies seem to suggest the effects of corporal punishment upon children have different effects at different stages of development. According to Straus (1994) the use of corporal punishment of children by parents in the age group ten years and above is less normative (usual) and therefore when older children are smacked it may have stronger effects than when children are younger. Additionally, this finding is confounded in terms of gender differences, since it is possible boys may exhibit more aggression than girls and are therefore more likely to be on the receiving end of corporal punishment (Straus and Stewart 1999; Lewis and Maynard 2000).

According to Gershoff, most research studies are biased towards looking for negative outcomes rather than any positive outcomes of parents' use of corporal punishment. The findings of Gershoff's analysis suggest only one positive association with parental use of corporal punishment, immediate compliance, according to parents' reports (for example, see Roberts and Powers 1990; Baumrind 1996 and Larzelare 1996).

Gershoff' concludes that psychologists have divided opinion about the use of corporal punishment, with some in agreement that its benefits outweigh potential harm. For example, both Larzelare (1996) and Baumrind (1997) opine that in the short term, non-injurious corporal punishment can be an effective and desirable strategy for parents. Additionally, Larzelere (1996) and Baumrind et al. (2002) make the case that ordinary physical punishment is not actually harmful to children and state a smack is rarely a wild assault, resulting in actual bodily or psychological damage. Arguably, a smack and 'moving on' is less damaging than the 'withdrawal of love' approach sometimes favoured by those who reject physical punishment (Larzelere 1996). Moreover, it is suggested the evidence to support a ban on all physical punishment is very weak (Larzelere 2000; Philips 2000). However, other researchers, such as Straus (1994) and McCord (1997) believed it to be an ineffective form of discipline that is potentially harmful. These polarised views have been teased out further in subsequent systematic reviews of the literature on the topic.

Gershoff concluded her analysis by identifying a number of remaining issues for future research into the effects of corporal punishment. Firstly, research is required that situates the use of corporal punishment in a socio-cultural context, taking account of religious values that may support the regular use of corporal punishment. Gershoff hypothesises that the controlled use of smacking when used instrumentally (planned) may have few negative effects than when used reactively and infrequently since there is a sense in which the smacking is deemed an acceptable behaviour. This is an issue that is explored in the more recent meta-analysis conducted by Paolucci and Violato (2004).

Secondly there is a need for research that examines parents' beliefs about the use of corporal punishment from a multi-ethnic perspective and which separates out variables associated with ethnicity from those related to disadvantage. Lastly, Gershoff was able to identify from her findings that further research is required that is sensitive to geographical differences. Identification of these gaps in knowledge prompted me to engage with the literature that focuses upon socio cultural issues related to smacking and this is discussed later in the second category of literature reviewed for the current doctoral study.

Benjet and Kazdin's literature review (2003), sought to convey possible reasons for limited progress in answering the sort of questions that were posed in previous psychological research, primarily, are the consequences of smacking 'good or bad' (p.199). Conclusions are drawn about the need to expand the research agenda in order to explore influences that foster and maintain the use of smacking and the social processes in which smacking operates.

Benjet and Kazdin (2003) take the smacking debate on a little further by identifying three main positions. Firstly, the anti-corporal punishment position, which argues all corporal punishment is harmful, since it is a form of violence that intergenerationally begets violence. This position is underpinned by ethical principles about inflicting pain upon children and also social learning theory (Bandura 1977). From within this position there is agreement that parental use of smacking contributes to the overall level of violence in society, in what Straus (1994) terms 'cultural spillover'. The logic here is that if smacking is outlawed in society then society will experience less violence and crime more generally.

The second position, that of both Baumrind (1996) and Larzelare (1996 and 2000), emphasises that the effects of smacking is dependent upon conditions. Smacking can have either positive or negative consequences. This position is argued purely upon the evidence base provided by psychological research rather than from a moral perspective.

The final position is one not argued in the research literature but is a position articulated by lay audiences; for example, from within conservative religious groups, who sometimes refer to biblical scripture to support their position. Adherents to this position assume that not to smack is detrimental for the individual and for society. This is a position cited in the print media texts that were analysed as part of this doctoral study (see Chapter Four).

According to Benjet and Kazdin (2003), the significance of these three positions on corporal punishment is that researchers are likely to ask different questions according to their stance: either, is the use of corporal punishment harmful to children, or, how does the use of corporal punishment compare with other forms of discipline? Interestingly, Benjet and Kazdin found that this latter question has been little researched.

A most useful outcome of Benjet and Kazdin's paper are the beginnings of discussion about the ethics of smacking rather than approaches which focus purely upon the effects of smacking. Benjet and Kazdin also introduce the idea that although smacking may have implications for individuals, it also may have more far reaching consequences for society as a whole. This suggests that the use of smacking by parents is a contemporary public health issue. The ethics of

smacking are discussed in greater depth within the second category of literature presented in this literature review. Understandings about the effects of smacking for society and moral arguments about the use of smacking are recurrent themes within the findings of this doctoral study.

A more recent meta-analysis conducted by Paolucci and Violato (2004) contributes further to debate about the use of corporal punishment. Included for evaluation were seventy empirical studies of the effects of normative, non-abusive corporal punishment on youth's affective cognitive and behavioural development. Similarities were found with the systematic review and meta-analyses discussed previously in that there is no clear-cut definitive conclusion as to any harmful effects of smacking. Conclusions indicated that non-abusive punishment had only slightly negative effects upon behaviour or affective problems. Additionally, Paolucci and Violato's meta-analysis also suggests experiencing non-abusive smacking has almost no effect upon academic performance, attitudes towards violence or mental health.

Studies included in Paolucci and Violato's meta-analysis, which were not included in either that of Larzelare or Gershoff, offered support for the view that the effects of normative smacking are conditional. For example, Gunnoe's analysis (2003) of studies that dealt with the effects of corporal punishment suggest that the age of the child is significant in terms of effect, with outcomes for younger children aged below six years being predominantly positive, whilst in studies of older children aged between seven and eleven years, more negative outcomes such as increased aggression were reported. These

findings concur with the Straus study that was described previously in Gershoff's analysis (2002).

Paolucci and Violato added to existing knowledge about the use of corporal punishment in their discussion that highlights problems in assuming that a linear connection between what parents do and resultant outcomes for children when attempting to determine correlation between correlation between parents' use of corporal punishment and children's behaviour. For example, Macmillan et al (1999) reported on the findings of a large Canadian population survey (n= 9953) in which participants self-reported upon their experience of slapping and spanking and participated in an interviewer-administered questionnaire that measured psychiatric disorder. The authors concluded there was a linear association between the frequency of physical punishment in childhood and a lifelong prevalence of anxiety disorder, alcohol abuse and externalising problems. However, within this study and others, there are a number of factors that are likely to interplay, presenting a more complex picture. For example factors located with the parent may include inconsistency in their style of discipline, it's severity and frequency. Corporal punishment may be used as a spur of the moment decision or as part of a planned discipline strategy. Alternatively corporal punishment may be used alongside other less punitive measures such as 'time out' or reasoning with the child. Where this combined strategy is practiced, outcomes appear to be more positive, with greater effectiveness achieved in preventing future misbehaviour. Conversely, when corporal punishment is use alongside verbal aggression the effects are magnified, with a greater association with aggression and delinquency (Larzelare 1996, 1998).

Two studies included in Paolucci and Violato's analysis seeks to address one of the issues for further study, highlighted in Gershoff's earlier meta-analysis (2002). This alternative position sheds further light on circumstances that may mitigate the effects of smacking (Bower-Russell et al 2001 and Lansford et al 2005). Lansford et al suggest that acceptance of the normative position, that may include the use of smacking or other forms of corporal punishment of children, is itself a mitigating factor. The findings of their large-scale multi-centre study conducted in Italy, China, India, Kenya, The Philippines and Thailand, indicate physical discipline was less strongly associated with adverse outcomes for children in conditions where children perceived this to be normative. However, rather than presenting a strong cultural relativist position, the authors warn that caution must be exercised in interpreting these findings on two counts. Firstly, when physical punishment was used frequently, despite any kind of link with perceptions of normative behaviour, this behaviour was associated with adjustment problems. Secondly, the authors suggest (almost as an aside) that although the practice of physical punishment might be normative, this does not necessarily make it acceptable. They point to the past, when a number of activities that were once condoned, such as child labour, are no longer considered to be acceptable. Rather than considering the effects of physical discipline upon the individual, the findings from an earlier study (Bower-Russell et al 2001), suggested participants' perception of the normative nature of childhood experience of physical discipline as a predictor parental use of physical discipline. Bower-Russell et al suggest that when participants had experienced severe physical punishment and labelled themselves as having been abused, they were less likely to use physical discipline as parents. Those participants who did not recognise such severe physical punishment as abusive

and instead considered their experience to be normative, were more likely to use physical discipline with their own children as they saw nothing wrong with this practice. The findings from the Bower-Russell et al study (2001) and the Lansford et al study (2005) appear to represent conflicting outcomes: while perception of physical punishment as normative may have a mitigating effect on outcomes for children, perception of physical punishment as normative may predict the use of physical punishment as a parent and thereby contribute to trans-generational transmission of such practices.

Interestingly, the four large-scale reviews and meta-analyses previously discussed include research that is predominantly drawn from American academic literature. It appears that little research on the psychological effects of corporal punishment was published in the UK within the timescale of the four studies. Although lessons can be learned from the American studies, there is a need for studies that focus primarily upon experience in the UK in order that comparisons can be made and also that will allow implications for practice to be determined that have potentially greater cultural relevance.

According to psychological research there are difficulties in drawing conclusions about the association between experiencing corporal punishment as a child and being aggressive, experiencing mental ill health and in physically abusing children as a parent: many other personal (psychological and biological) and situational factors may be influential within this timeframe and cannot easily be controlled for in research studies (Gershoff 2002).

There is disagreement as to whether all forms of physical discipline of children should be discouraged in favour of other tactics, or if in certain conditions smacking can be an effective disciplinary strategy (Bunting et al 2008). Benjet and Kazdin (2003), in their comparison of the conclusions that were drawn by Gershoff (2002) and Larzelare (2000), found concurrence on three conclusions but also points of disagreement. The areas of agreement were that immediate compliance follows corporal punishment; age moderates the outcomes of smacking, with the most beneficial effects amongst children six years of age and under and lastly that frequent use of corporal punishment is related to a range of detrimental outcomes such as mental health issues. However, Gershoff and Larzelare fundamentally disagree about the overall benefit or detriment of smacking, with Larzelare finding that smacking is not generally harmful, while Gershoff concludes that overall, smacking is associated with undesirable outcomes. Additionally, according to Benjet and Kazdin (2003), Larzelare's position suggests that causality can be determined from the studies he analysed, while Gershoff found that definitive causal relationships between smacking and child outcomes could not be determined.

These inconsistencies, which may be explained by characteristics such as the selection of studies for inclusion in meta analysis, or concomitant social factors (third variables that are not accounted for), have challenged policy makers and professionals who work with families, as a clear position about possible harmful effects of smacking has not been achieved from within the body of psychological research.

Although many children have experienced corporal punishment as children, most do not go on to experience negative behaviours. Gershoff (2002) identified that further research is required to explore the nature of resilience and mediating factors, since variables such as stressful life circumstances may account for all of the negative outcomes that were found in the studies she analysed. Likewise, these kinds of issues were not explored in the two subsequent reviews (Benjet and Kazdin 2003 and Paolucci and Violato 2004)

Within the four large-scale studies discussed, there were no qualitative studies. This represents a huge gap in understandings about corporal punishment since parents' and children's understandings of smacking within the context of everyday life have not been explored. Furthermore, since researchers operationalised definitions of corporal punishment to enable them to draw exclusion and inclusion criteria, the definitions of corporal punishment held by participants themselves were not clarified.

Each of the four studies contributes to knowledge and understanding about the psychological effects of corporal punishment, and although there are conflicting opinions about the longer term effects of smacking, the idea that smacking may be a useful back up tool for parents when used to support alternative more positive strategies is the position that has informed current UK policy on parents' use of smacking. Although some of the professional organisations, including the Community Nurse and Health Visitors Association have taken a stance that all forms of corporal punishment should be outlawed, never the less, the 'conditional' use of smacking as described by Larzelare (2000) is a position that is adopted by some health visitors and parents. The views of health visitors

are discussed at greater length within the third category of literature in this doctoral study and are returned to in the findings chapters of the current study.

In the following section, discussion moves away from psychological arguments for and against the use of smacking that were a dominant feature of the literature of the 1980s and 1990s, to consider the literature that instead conceptualises smacking as a cultural phenomenon. Recognition of cultural factors that may influence parents' approaches to child discipline go some way towards exploring some of the outstanding questions posed and limitations of the studies previously discussed.

2:4 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONCEPTS OF SMACKING

Sociologist and anthropologists have conceptualised smacking rather differently to psychologists. Rather than focusing upon the efficacy of smacking or potential for long or short-term harmful effects, research and discussion papers reviewed in the following section explore the role of culture and introduce debate about smacking as a human rights issue.

Researchers on family life have offered competing and complementary explanations about parents' choice of disciplinary approaches. In attempting to explore which families are most likely to favour punitive approaches to child discipline a number of explanations have been offered. Some of these explanations focus upon socio-economic determinants including structural causes of poverty that often result in experience of enduring stress (Belsky 1993, Sidebotham 2001 and Garbarino 2005), while others focus upon theories

that emphasise the role of culture, such as religious affiliation (Straus and Mathur 1996 and Murphy-Cowan and Stringer 2001). In some of the papers, cultural differences in parenting styles were associated with geographical area (Thompson and Pearce 2001 and Jutengren and Palmérus 2002). Although each determinant of parents' use of physical punishment could be described separately, this presents an over simplified picture, since one factor is likely to interact with another.

Within this second category of literature reviewed, papers that addressed wider issues that help to explain how smacking has become a social phenomenon and how this has been perpetuated over time. Within this literature, smacking is conceptualised in terms of different understanding of children's rights and the social space that children have occupied within UK society. These papers are in the main discursive or theoretical rather than reports on empirical research studies.

2:4:1 Cultural Patterns of Physical Discipline

Cultural factors operate within the politico- legal context that may in turn influence behaviour. For example, Jutengren and Palmérus (2002), conducted a cross-cultural study that compared fifty Swedish and fifty United States (US) fathers' use of parental discipline. The participants were interviewed using a previously validated tool, the Parental Discipline Interview. Three coding categories were used to analyse the data using factor analysis, behaviour modification, coercion (including physical restraint and punishment) and verbal

control. Findings indicated that Swedish fathers tended to use restraint rather than punishment, while US fathers were more likely to use physical punishment. However, both Swedish and US fathers were just as likely to intervene in response to their children's behaviour. To attribute this finding purely to geographical influence would surely be inadequate. Instead, given the differences in legislation on parents' use for smacking in the two countries this finding is not surprising. This study lends support to a view that legislative change can drive behavioural change. Furthermore, in contrast to the US and the UK, Sweden is said to be a society that values equality and has used legislation to ensure that there is greater equity in the social position of adults and children. The idea of a more egalitarian 'cultural type' and the relevance of this theory is discussed later in this section in relation to the work of Giles, Sim and Lockhart (2005).

In another study (Thompson and Pearce 2001) the beliefs and disciplinary practices of fifty-four parents of young children attending a Nottinghamshire (UK) nursery were surveyed. The participants were of different ethnic origins; 67% white British, 20% Bangladeshi and the remaining from other ethnic origins not stated in the study report. The study concluded attitudes towards physical punishment differed amongst parents living in the same geographical area. Although the conclusions to this study did not explain why parents held different beliefs about the use of smacking, for example the opportunity to explore possible associations of influence of ethnicity and religious affiliation was missed, the findings suggest that there might be dissonance between beliefs and behaviour. Only a quarter of parents in the sample were reported to believe that smacking was an appropriate way to handle unsafe behaviour but two

thirds were reported to have smacked in the week prior to the survey. This study's findings are limited by nature of the methodology, that is, the use of a survey rather than in depth interviews as a method of data collection. The results suggest that relationships between beliefs and behaviour are complex. Furthermore, the authors (Thompson and Pearce 2001) suggest that the promotion of positive parenting approaches by child health professionals may not be enough to bring about a decrease in the physical punishment of children, and that legal change may be required to make the practice of smacking socially unacceptable and thus to change the culture of smacking.

Although both of these studies lend support to a view that legislation can be a catalyst for social change, other research presents a more complex view. In the section that follows, the idea of *global cultural types* contributes to discussion about the effects of structural change such as amendment to legislation on parents' use of smacking and intersects with discussion about the role of religion in influencing parents' decisions to use smacking or other forms of corporal punishment,

Giles-Sims and Lockhart (2005) in a discussion paper that sought to explain how culture contributes to shaping parenting practices, argue that families are orientated towards one of four global cultural types that operate within society; hierarchical, egalitarian, individualistic and fatalistic. The essence of the theory is that orientation to one or another of these cultural types can predict the extent to which corporal punishment will be used by parents. Shared beliefs about the legitimacy of external prescription and the strength of affiliation with others are said to explain in a Durkheimian sense, fundamental social questions about the

way that social norms persist. In the following paragraphs each of these cultural types are described and their significance is discussed.

Hierarchical Cultural Type

Families that value hierarchy are likely to believe that organisations such as churches, schools and governments and parents themselves, provide sound direction about how individuals and families should act. Accordingly, within this cultural type, relationships amongst family members are unequal, as a hierarchy exists within the family. Captured within the hierarchical culture is the idea that the status quo within society is maintained by enforcement of society's rules. Deviation from these socially sanctioned norms merits disciplinary practices such as threats or corporal punishment. This perspective is summed up in the words of Ellis and Peterson (1992):

The more a society values the inculcation of conformity or obedience in children, the more it is typified by the use of coercive socialisation (Ellis and Peterson 1992, p52).

There is some support for this assertion in research findings that have explored relationships of religious affiliation with parental support for the use of corporal punishment. For example, Murphy–Cowan and Stringer (2001) in a survey of three hundred and seventy parents who completed a self-report questionnaire, found that conservative protestants living in Northern Ireland were more likely to use physical discipline than their catholic counterparts. Although the findings from Murphy-Cowan and Stringer's study are limited by the methodology, in that self report questionnaires do not allow participants reported actions or beliefs to be fully contextualised, and do not allow the researcher to seek clarification or

to probe where answers may be ambiguous, they suggest that the influence of religious beliefs has laid the foundations for a moral ideology that demands parents exert their authority over their children as a duty to God and society. Consequently the use of physical discipline is not seen in a negative light. Interestingly, the role of the practice of confession within Catholicism is not addressed. It may be that the requirement to confess ones sins before God and the priest, in some way acts as a powerful external prescription and thereby reduces the likelihood of physical punishment being used. These findings have some significance for this doctoral study in relation to narrative accounts of participants from the Scottish Islands, and are referred to again in Chapter [Six](#).

Egalitarian Cultural Type

Within more egalitarian cultural types, the family has a clear identity that serves to place value on familial bonds underpinned by mutual respect. Within this model, children are not regarded as subservient to adults; neither are there gender inequalities. Children are encouraged to learn self-discipline and are encouraged to make decisions for themselves. Although parents may occasionally use mild forms of corporal punishment, other approaches to discipline, such as discussion and reasoning are more usual. Accordingly, corporal punishment is more widely used in societies that value conformity to societal norms. If, however, the egalitarian cultural type becomes the societal norm, then confirming to the norm may result in more parents choosing to use discussion and reasoning rather than corporal punishment. The need to change the societal 'default position' was discussed by some participants' in the narrative interviews conducted for this doctoral thesis and ideas about equity,

respect, recognition and reciprocity are discussed in the findings chapters that follow.

As previously identified in relation to the Jutengren and Palmérus (2002) study, Giles-Sims and Lockhart (2005) cite Swedish society as having a high incidence of egalitarians within it and suggest it is not surprising that even before legislation was introduced in Sweden to outlaw all forms of corporal punishment in the home, the use of corporal punishment by parents was starting to decline (Durrant 1999).

Similarly, Straus and Mathur (1996) observed that change in cultural norms of parents' use of physical punishment reflect change in American social structure. As current trends for wider participation in higher education and employment opportunities rely on interpersonal skills, such as negotiation, rather than rigid routines of traditional manual labour, parents socialise their children accordingly. However, geographical differences in the rate of change in approval of corporal punishment were found. The southern states, which have a higher proportion of African-American inhabitants, had higher levels of approval of corporal punishment than in other regions or amongst other ethnic groups (Flynn 1994). Approval of corporal punishment amongst more highly educated groups has declined more quickly than for those groups having experienced less formal education.

Fatalistic Cultural Type

The fatalistic cultural type suggested by Giles-Sim and Lockhart (2005) could help to explain this phenomenon, in that social disadvantage and lack of

opportunities amongst African-American inhabitants of the southern states of the United States of America are likely result in a more fatalistic attitude towards a social environment in which they have little control. Within the context of this fatalistic cultural pattern, parents are said to be more likely to use harsher forms of punishment on children and less likely to be consistent in their disciplinary practices (Giles-Sim and Lockhart 2005). This connection is not fully explained in the literature, but one is left to assume that these fatalistic parents decide to use corporal punishment since this is a place where they experience some control in their daily lives. Other explanations such as those that focus upon socio-ecological determinants as offered by Garbarino (2005) and Sidebotham (2001) for example, more convincingly connect the daily experience of enduring hardship with increased likelihood that physical punishment is used as a spur of the moment activity, lashing out in frustration rather than prioritising the use of alternative non punitive parenting strategies.

Individualistic Cultural Type

The individualistic pattern of parenting corresponds closely with what Baumrind (1991) regarded as *laissez faire* or permissive parenting. Individualistic parents are said to be pragmatic when making decisions about disciplinary practices. According to Giles-Sim and Lockhart, these parents are more likely to use corporal punishment than egalitarian parents if warranted by the situation and when other approaches, such as bribery have failed. Interestingly, more individualistic parents are thought to value achievements and ability to make decisions independently rather than the quality of emotional ties amongst family members.

There are limitations to the use of Giles-Sim and Lockhart's application of this theory of four global cultural types in relation to parenting behaviour, in that parents within a family may value ideas about hierarchy and egalitarian principles differently and therefore may not exclusively fall into one of the four groups, hierarchical, egalitarian, individualistic or fatalistic. Additionally, the idea that families and individuals within families may change their values over time is not considered. The focus is upon the maintenance of continuity rather than change. A further weakness in applying this theory to parenting behaviours is that attention to resilience factors which may act in mitigation and that may act to break the cycle of intergenerational use of corporal punishment have not been explored. However, the theory usefully provides insights into global rather than individual patterns of behaviour and suggests explanations as to how smacking as a social phenomenon has persisted as part of the culture of parenting over time.

It is clear that issues about how beliefs and practices are sustained in society are complex. The role of structures, such as the law in influencing beliefs and behaviour were theorised by Giles Sim and Lockhart (2005). However, other potentially influential structures within contemporary society, such as the media, were not considered. In the following section, literature that explored media influences upon beliefs and practices related to smacking are reviewed.

2:4:2 Media Representation of Smacking

According to Sidebotham (2001) an aspect of culture that has been little studied is the way in which media representation may shape attitudes towards

smacking or indeed more serious forms of child abuse. Instead, according to Sidebotham, the focus has been upon micro determinants of child abuse, such as the context of the family and household and larger social systems in which the family is embedded and including the effects of poverty and lack of support systems. Thus, the aim of the subsequent literature search and review was to discover how the media has represented smacking. Although there is a paucity of literature on the way in which the media have represented smacking, useful insights have been gained about the role of 'media templates' in conceptualising smacking over time.

The notion that the many different statements and opinions presented in the print media produce a shared cultural understanding of phenomena underpins this approach (King and Watson 2005). According to Goddard and Saunders (2000) media texts can provide evidence about social structures, processes and relationships. There is a sense in which the media acts as a mirror in that it may reflect current societal values and at the same time may influence peoples' understanding of issues such as smacking.

Media representation of smacking proved to be a very under researched area. Over the past fifteen years, a number of studies have examined the way that health and social issues, such as the portrayal of children as 'innocent victims' of cancer, have been represented by the mass media within genres that include television soap operas, cartoons, films and newspapers (King and Watson 2005; Seale 2002). A few studies have looked at the way in which child abuse has been represented in the print media (Goddard and Liddell 1995; Goddard and Saunders 2000; Kitzinger 2000). However, no UK research studies were

found in the nursing, sociological and anthropological literature that specifically analysed media representation of smacking by parents.

One of the few such studies found by searching the literature, intimates that concerns about the use of smacking and other forms of physical discipline are not new amongst parents. Davis et al (2004) qualitatively and quantitatively analysed a sample of one hundred and forty-seven letters that were published in an American newspaper in the 1920s and 1930s. The letters had been written by middleclass parents in the United States of America who were concerned about the behaviour of their children. A newspaper columnist and radio presenter, who was also a child psychologist, provided responses to the letters. The study findings suggest there was controversy about the use of physical discipline by parents and that similar to today, attitudes and practices were varied and complex. Parents had often been prompted to write to the newspaper psychologist because they had received conflicting advice about corporal punishment. The most usual reasons given for the use of corporal punishment were parental concerns about lack of respect for parents and disobedience. Interestingly, the advice given by the newspaper 'agony aunt' emphasised the efficacy of corporal punishment rather than any moral or children's rights perspective. The responses to these letters foreshadow the focus of the psychological research on the effects of smacking as discussed previously in this chapter.

The idea of 'media templates' (Kitzinger 2000; Seale 2002) helps to explain why smacking has not been the focus of media attention until more recent times and why subsequently the topic of media representation of smacking has not been

the focus of research. According to Seale (2002), the media did not 'discover' child abuse until the 1980s, when this 'template' for a news story first appeared in the print media. This particular news template included the notion of a stereotypical innocent childhood in which the perpetrators of abuse were strangers to the child. Kitzinger (2000) suggested that inclusion of stories about parental abusers were often left out of the news because they did not fit into a template that was simplistically about good and evil. Using this idea of the 'media template', it is possible that the paucity of research about media representation of smacking corresponds with a lack of reportage on what is understood to be a usual and legitimate parental activity. The reviewed literature has not provided an explanation of a possible relationship between the media and its influence upon contemporary smacking discourse. The literature review supports Sidebotham's (2001) assertions that the interrelation of wider social and cultural factors, including media representation of smacking, has been little researched in terms of outcomes.

Parenting issues such as smacking have provided subject material for television soap operas, radio programmes and also in parenting magazines. Exploration of these genres could provide a rich source of contemporary social data. However, access to sources that specifically tackle issues about parents' use of smacking is problematic, as there is no comprehensive data- base that allows the contents of particular television programmes or popular magazines to be searched.

Review of the literature on media representation of smacking has revealed there is a paucity of research on how the media define smacking and how the media may contextualise and contribute to wider discourse about

interconnected issues of parenting, relationship, children's rights and social change. This gap in research influenced my decision to include an exploration of media representation of smacking within the design of the current doctoral study.

Although the literature that deals with cultural influences upon parenting practices contributes to understandings about parents use of smacking in a way that goes beyond discussion purely about determining potential harm, attention to children's rights was not a substantive part of any of the research described so far in this chapter. It is this issue that is considered in the following section.

2:5 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

In this section, sociological literature that synthesises current debate about children's rights is reviewed within the context of changing perspectives on the social position of children in our society. Benjet and Kazdin (2003), concluded their systematic review of the psychological research literature on the effects of smacking, by stating that despite the difficulties in conducting empirical research on the experience of smacking and its effects upon child development, practitioners and policy makers need to offer evidence based advice rather than advice based upon moral arguments. However, not all writers agree with this assertion. For example, Roberts (2000) and Freeman (2007) state that the most powerful argument for advising strongly against smacking is based on the recognition of the human rights of the child. This reflects my own position, that regardless of whether or not smacking is effective or does no psychological harm, a more fundamental issue should be that of recognition of children as fellow human beings. Recognition of adults and children as interdependent may

influence choices that are made regarding disciplinary practices at the level of policy making and at an individual family level.

2:5:1 Different Understandings of Children's Rights

Since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) was ratified, there has been an increase in published debate about what constitutes children's rights. Prior to the UNCRC, the focus for much of the literature about smacking was upon its effects. Although issues about the possible harmful effects of smacking continue to be raised in contemporary literature, concepts about children's rights are in the fore. Review of the literature about children's rights revealed that children's rights were conceptualised in different ways. Debate about children's rights intersects with ideas about ownership of children, children's participation and reciprocity within child and parent relationship.

Who Owns the Child?

Attitudes and practice seem to conflict according to the literature that is concerned with the ownership of children, for example, in relation to competence and consent to treatment and medical procedures (Lowden 2002, Shields et al 2003, Taylor 1999). Underpinning views about consent are notions about the 'ownership' of children. Shields et al (2003) explained that although the use of the term 'ownership' (of one human being by another) might be thought of as controversial, historically, ownership of another as slaves for example, was accepted until the nineteenth century and incidentally continues to be experienced by children and some adults in the present day. Shields et al (2003) found that when hospital staff were asked about ownership of the child in

hospital, responses indicated it was the doctor, the nurse in charge or the parents who owned the child. No one in their study questioned the use of the term ownership or the idea that children were 'owned' by another. Paternalism that comes with ownership is offered as a reason for the paradoxical situation whereby children may be considered competent to agree to treatment but not so when they refuse treatment. Instead, parents and health care professionals sought to act 'in the best interests of the child' (Lowden 2002).

Furthermore, entrenched acceptance of ideas about ownership of children by their parents is evident in the wording of current legislation in the UK about parents' use of corporal punishment and also in discussion about state involvement in the family. Shields et al (2003) conclude their paper with the following suggestion that:

The concept of one human being owning another is the ethical antithesis to contemporary beliefs about human rights (Shields et al 2003 p214).

Within the children's rights debate, ideas about ownership sit in juxtaposition to ideas about autonomy and self-determination. For example, the National Children's Bureau (NCB 1992) have suggested three different approaches to thinking about children's rights: protectionist, liberationist and pragmatic approaches.

Protectionist Perspectives on Children's Rights

What has been described as a protectionist approach, positions adults as protectors or guardians of children, who in turn are considered to be vulnerable. According to Fulton (1996) this approach is a remnant of the nineteenth century child-saving era, when the dominant view was that children should be protected

from themselves for their own good. Within a protectionist approach, children are not credited with capability for autonomy or self-determination. This approach to children's rights converges with what Sebba (2005) and Nieuwenhuys (2008) term 'abstract universalism'. They point out that this is the approach adopted by the UNCRC and is typified in its reference to 'the child'. The main point being that globally, all children regardless of cultural diversity are entitled to the rights and freedoms that are found within the convention. Loudon (2002) suggests that following the ratification of the UNCRC; the first UK report on progress reflected a protectionist approach. However, this was by no-means the ideology found within the Children Act (Department of Education and Skills 2004) and subsequent Scottish equivalent. Instead, the need to listen to children and to respect their feelings and individuality is emphasised.

Nieuwenhuys (2008) contributed to ethical arguments that are involved in the children's rights debate, by questioning the abstract universalist position, and its tenet that there is such a thing as an 'essential childhood', and the diametrically opposed cultural relativist position that emphasises that there is such a thing as an 'essential culture' (p.6).

Nieuwenhuys (2008) asserts that notions of childhood only make sense within the context of the culture to which they belong. Within a cultural relativist position, instead of protecting an essential childhood, the phenomenon of an 'essential culture' is considered to be in need of protection. The possible outcome for adherents to a cultural relativist approach is that of limited or no intervention, while for protectionists, or the abstract universalist position, it is morally unthinkable to propose inaction.

Nieuwenhuys (2008), drawing upon Bourdieu (1997) who claimed that both the position of cultural relativism and abstract universalism could be opposed and who drew attention to the importance of the need to look at, 'who says what about whom' (p7), proposed an alternative way within this polemic. The imperative to consider the sorts of power relationships that exist, prompted Nieuwenhuys to suggest the focus should be upon children's agency. This alternative position stresses that both cultures and childhood are not enduring entities, but instead can be adapted or transformed by children or adults.

A Liberationist Perspective on Children's Rights

Children's agency is the focus of the liberationist perspective according to the NCB (1992). Here, children are seen as an oppressed, marginalised group who have been deprived of their civil rights (Lowden 2002, Sebba 2005). According to Fulton (1996), children's abilities to understand complex human relationships and to reason have often been unrecognised in British social institutions, such as within health and social care and I would also add, within the institution that is the family. Liberationists have highlighted examples of the way children have sometimes demonstrated a mature understanding of complex situations that affect their future, within healthcare for example (Alderson and Montgomery 1996). According to liberationists, the logical conclusion is that children are not in need of protection, but instead need to be empowered to participate fully (Fulton 1996). Critics of this approach emphasise empirical child development and the stages at which children may be deemed competent to participate.

A Pragmatic Approach to Children's Rights

The third approach, proposed by NCB (1992), a pragmatic approach, is described as a middle way, between protectionism and liberationist ideas. A flexible approach is suggested, that recognises although there is a need to safeguard children, there is also need to adopt a positive approach which values children's self-determination rights and that enables opportunity for autonomy. How this approach is actually performed in the lives of children is unclear, as according to Lowden (2002), even when children in health or social care settings have been allowed to articulate choice, their views are not always enacted. Similarly, Nieuwenhuys (2008) does not explain how children's agency may be fostered. This approach does not seem to be as pragmatic as the NCB suggest. A further discussion that offers deeper, more rational and more pragmatic insights into understandings of children's rights is presented by Mayall (2001).

Valuing Children within Relationships of Reciprocity with Adults

Drawing upon her previous research with children and also the proposals of O'Neill for a covenant society (O'Neill 1994), Mayall (2001) suggests that three inter-related concepts are central to the discussion of the sociology of childhood and children's rights; generation, reciprocity and relationship. Within a covenant society according to O'Neill, reciprocity is valued:

In a covenant theory of the state and community it is recognised that gender, age, infirmity, health, intelligence and strength are the very element of moral and political life and require of us a judicious weighting of the moral contributions of both justice and care in dealing with one another (O'Neill 1994 p. 41-42).

Ideas about reciprocity became increasingly important to this doctoral study as I focused upon my interpretation of the findings from participants' narratives. Therefore, I have discussed the significance of O'Neill's 'covenant society' more fully in relation to the findings in Chapter Eight.

According to Mayall, in relation to generation, responsibility by children to parents as well as by parents to children is one way that reciprocity can be enacted. In acknowledging reciprocity, moral worth is valued since reciprocity recognises interdependence within social relationships. It follows that if the moral worth of a social group (such as children) is valued, then their rights as human beings will be honoured. At the same time this removes children from a position of subordination to adults. Furthermore, a most crucial aspect of this theory is that the idea of reciprocity within interdependent social relationships eliminates the need for 'competence as a pre-condition for participation' (Mayall 2001 p.249). As such, Mayall has moved discussion about children's rights away from the polarisation of abstract universalism and liberationist perspectives to something that is not about autonomy, competence or developmental stage, but to one that recognises intergenerational reciprocity as a fundamental requirement for human rights.

While there is agreement in the literature that children should be afforded the same human rights as adults, there is less agreement about the potential for legislature to bring about social change, to alter public consciousness of the way that smacking is defined and thereby to influence parenting behaviour. As Giles-Sims and Lockhart (2005) pointed out, some families are more likely than others to respond to external prescription, such as regulation. Similarly, in an

earlier paper, Davis (1999) reported on a small scale (n=22) qualitative study that used semi-structured interviewing techniques to collect data from American parents in order to explore the contexts in which they had ceased to use smacking with their children; a topic previously little researched. Findings from the Davis (1999) study indicate that parenting behaviour is dependent upon different contexts. For example, some parents were found to respond to regulatory pressures, whilst others were prompted by memories of their own experience of physical punishment in childhood, experience as a smacking parent and a change in ideological position about parents' rights and children's rights. The Davis study was one of the few qualitative studies identified in the literature search. Although Davis intended to include fathers and mothers in the study, only mothers participated and therefore conclusions that may be drawn from the findings are limited. Methodological challenges involved in engaging fathers in research is considered in relation to this current doctoral study in Chapter Four, the methodology chapter. The main strength of Davis' study is that it contributes to understandings about mothers' experience of ceasing to use physical punishment within the context of their life experiences in a way that goes beyond simple consideration of efficacy or potential to do harm.

In the previous section, different ways of conceptualising children's rights has broadened discussion about the use of smacking by parents, however, the literature reviewed so far has not taken into account children's own views about how they should be treated. When children are removed from a position of subordination to adults, to a position that recognises their worth, it is important to take account of their views. With this in mind, the literature reviewed in the

following section sets out to discover how children's voices have been allowed to be heard within research on smacking.

2:6 LISTENING TO CHILDREN'S VOICES ABOUT SMACKING

Research on parents' use of corporal punishment is limited by the fact that children, the recipients of physical punishment, are rarely asked to be the source of information in research studies on this topic (Holden 2002). This possibly reflects the position that children have occupied in the social world. What I mean by this is, explanations that position children as a marginalised group (Qvortrup et al 1994), help to shed light upon reasons why children's experience of smacking have not been sought. Three papers were identified in the literature search that focused upon children's experience of physical punishment; Rohner et al (1991, 1996) and Matos and Rohner (2004). In three separate quantitative studies, Caribbean, American and Puerto Rican young peoples' perceptions of their caregivers' acceptance or rejection of them was surveyed. These studies report that young people's perception of parental acceptance or rejection mediates associations between physical punishment and psychological outcomes. In the first of these studies, results from surveys conducted with 349 nine year olds concluded that harshness of physical punishment correlated strongly with perceived carer rejection. In the two subsequent studies conducted with older children and young people aged between eight and nineteen years, conclusions were similar. All three of these studies are limited in their application to children's understandings of smacking since these studies seem to focus upon contexts in which harsh and frequent physical punishment is used rather than the milder forms of punishment.

Furthermore, these studies did not always capture current experience of physical punishment. Thus, conclusions cannot be generalised to include all levels of severity of physical punishment.

This gap in knowledge of children's perception of current experience was the focus of a large study conducted with children in England by Willow and Hider (1998) on behalf of the National Children's Bureau. Subsequent studies conducted in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and in Australia and New Zealand, that used Willow and Hyder's methodology, reported on similar findings (Cutting 2001, Dobbs and Duncan 2004, Horgan 2002, Saunders and Goddard 2008, Vulliamy and Croxley 2002). These studies represent a huge landmark in the history of the smacking debate, as up until the Willow and Hyder study, children's views on smacking had not been sought. These studies are hugely important on a further count in that they were conducted at a time in the UK when the Westminster parliament and the devolved parliaments were considering how legislation on smacking should respond to current changing opinions about its use by parents. Therefore, the results of these studies had enormous potential to contribute to change in social policy.

According to these studies, when children were asked how they experienced smacking by their parents, their views were more complex than simply objection to smacking on account of physical pain. Instead, children referred to emotional consequences, explaining that it hurt 'deep inside' (Willow and Hyder 1998, p3). For children, smacking was not the trivial form of punishment it is sometimes referred to by adults, in research papers and policy documents for instance. Children also showed a level of competence for which they are not always given

credit. For example, in Saunders and Goddard's study (2008), some children empathised with their parents' position, being stressed and frustrated when children did not always behave as desired. They also described the way some parents felt regret or guilt after smacking. These children remarked upon the paradox that smacking does not seem to be helpful for either children or adults, yet it continues to be part of parenting (Saunders and Goddard 2008). Additionally, conclusions to these reports suggest that children can teach adults something about alternatives to smacking and their views should be sought on any potential policy change (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2004).

How children should be consulted, within more general contexts, was the focus of a Scottish Study that involved talking with two hundred children from diverse social backgrounds and age ranges (Stafford et al 2003). Findings indicated that children wished to be consulted about their views on a number of issues that affect their daily lives; including participation in parliament, referenda and hence contribution to policy making. Furthermore, children in this study (Stafford et al 2003) explained that not only should their views be sought, but that they expected something to happen as a result. Despite 'children's voices' being heard, as reported in the Willow and Hyder study (1998), how their views were taken in account by Scottish government and the Westminster government during debate about banning the use of smacking and subsequent amendment to legislation is not at all clear since the use of smacking continues to be regarded as a legitimate disciplinary tool for parents to use. Quite possibly, children's voices were disregarded. Possible reasons for such disregard are complex and are rooted in the past.

Sparks et al (2002) offer useful explanations of contemporary social constructions of meaning about childhood and violence from children's perspectives. For example, in their discussions with nine-year old children they found that the children drew upon historical imagery of punishment when defending their views about types of physical punishment and when it could be used. According to the authors, the significance of this for our culture is that we carry with us 'the reverberations of the past' and that our 'cultural relatives' found such punishments acceptable (Sparks et al 2002, p123&128). The implications of this are that a shared history in some way contributes to the way we construct meaning of childhood and also family violence today (Rapport and Overing 2000).

These 'reverberations of the past' could explain how acceptance of physical punishment as part of parenting has continued to be normative and may in part explain individual's responses to questions about the effects of physical punishment, 'it didn't do me any harm, it was just what parents did then'. This response is typically found in many studies that have posed questions about the effects of physical punishment, and was reiterated by some participants in this doctoral study. Discussion of normative physical punishment of children needs to be considered within the context of changing societal perspectives on childhood and who children are.

2:7 CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ABOUT CHILDHOOD AND CHILDREN

The following section focuses upon the contribution of sociology to changing perspectives about childhood and children. How this discourse underpins

reasons for the persistence of the social construction of childhood as occupying a social space defined by what children are not is explored.

The way in which childhood has been socially constructed and reconstructed has changed over time (James and Prout 1997). Histories of the notion of childhood have been provided in the seminal works of Aries (1962), Postman (1983) and Hendrick (1997). These histories present a complex rather than a linear history, that take into account the influence of socio-economic forces, social institutions such as religion and the church, education movements, social policy such as welfare reform and the children's rights movement. For example, although children's role in the labour market has varied over time, more globally, there exist continuities with the past. Philosophical and religious perspectives of the past and the present have described children both as innately sinful and for whom it is the role of adults to correct, or as a 'tabula rasa' to be moulded. Children's experience of childhood has been and is, by no means universal despite attempts to define it as such (Hendrick 1997). 'Childhoods' plural, is a more accurate reflection of gender and class and cultural differences in the experience of childhood (Prout and James 1997).

Sociological theory about the positioning of children within society helps to clarify questions about the persistence of the social phenomenon of smacking, and additionally, offers reasons why children's views about smacking have been excluded from debate up until recent times. Explanations are found within perspectives that focus upon the social construction of childhood rather than perspectives that view the notion of childhood as a universal truth that is underpinned by developmental psychology. Mayall (1998) reiterates Prout and

James (1997) and asserts that the social position children have occupied in the past and in contemporary society is different to the position occupied by adults. Childhoods are shaped both structurally and culturally by adults according to the prescription of a particular society (Mayall 1998, Korbin 2003).

Qvortrup *et al* (1994) describe children as a minority group who lack political and civil rights and whilst social policy has attempted to address children's needs, it has neglected their rights as human beings. This is borne out in policies (e.g. anti-smacking legislation in Scotland and the rest of the UK) that focus upon the staging of children's biological developmental and that stress the vulnerability of children and their needs for protection.

According to McGillivray (1997) the law about the physical chastisement of children has focused upon children's bodies rather than children's minds or stage of emotional development. A similar point of view is echoed in the findings of a recent study commissioned by the Scottish Government, that aimed to survey parents' beliefs and practices about the use of corporal punishment (Anderson, Brownlie and Murray 2002). The focus of that study was wide ranging. Quantitative methods were used to analyse a nationally representative survey conducted in the homes of six hundred and ninety two parents. Additionally, a series of twenty qualitative interviews and focus groups were conducted with parents across Scotland.

It seems apparent that a number of parents included in the qualitative aspect of the study adopted the sort of 'conditional' approach to the use of corporal punishment described previously in this literature review (Benjet and Kazdin

2003). In some instances, understandings about the differentiation between hitting and smacking, the efficacy of smacking or a moral position was made in accordance with understandings about age. Participants were more likely to support smacking younger children, believing that this was unlikely to do long term harm, since younger children did not experience humiliation and were unlikely to remember the event as older children.

In a similar way, participants zoned the body in relation to their understanding of physical punishment. For example, there was broad agreement that children should not be hit with Implements such as the belt, slipper or cane, and that children should not be hit around the head or face. When participants referred to the severity or force behind the smack, there was some disparity, with some participants stating that the smack should not cause injury or leave a mark, while others understood that an effective smack was one that inflicted a modicum of pain. Here, children's bodies are fragmented in a Cartesian dualism between body and mind (Brownlie 2006). There is acknowledgement of the pain that is felt by the physical body, rather than feelings of pain that arise from embarrassment or humiliation. This zoning of children's bodies in relation to physical punishment by participants reflects an attempt by parents to be in control of children, while at the same time doing no harm, by choosing to smack parts of the body that were deemed less likely to result in long term harm.

While these participants, in the Scottish Executive study, did not define smacking in terms of children's rights, such embodied definitions of smacking are evident in current legislation for Scotland, and England and Wales (Scottish Executive 2002, Department for Education and Skills 2004). Supporters of the

use physical punishment on children defined smacking in accordance with current law.

Findings from the study previously described, (Anderson, Brownlie and Murray 2002) also indicate that parents who use smacking; albeit within a 'conditional approach' adopt a tutorial motive for their practice, believing it to teach children right from wrong. Acceptance of this form of socialisation, viewing children as passive recipients (e.g. Shilling 1993), has been challenged. Instead, Alanen (2010) suggests that rather than presenting socialisation as a unidirectional process that prepares children for the norms of adult life, recognition should be given to the role children themselves play in the construction of their social world. This alternative perspective on the socialisation of children challenges the legitimacy of parental use of smacking as an educationally motivated behaviour; doing it for a child's own good. Children's own understandings of this behaviour may not coincide with that of adults, as evidenced in Willow and Hyder's report for the NCB, 'It hurts you inside' (1998).

In writing about children as agents in their own health care within school and home settings, Mayall (1998), suggests rather than positioning children as the socialisation projects of adults, children can and do teach their parents that they are people and can work towards taking control over aspects of their lives. This is illustrated in a recent ethnographic study (Korbin 2003), which explored the deeply embedded cultural practices of rural Hawaiian Polynesians. Korbin described how strong social networks seemed to offer protection for children. Within the cultural context of rural Hawaii, neighbours or relatives did not hesitate to intervene by yelling from one house to the next if they thought that

the smacking had gone on long enough or was too severe a punishment for the misbehaviour. Korbin's study not only describes cultural practices but also explains how some aspects of every day life serve to determine how physical punishment is used on children and how even very young children as agents rather than passive recipients, quickly learned to shout or cry quickly and loudly to avoid severe punishment. This recognition of children's agency is part of what James and Prout (1997) have called a 'new paradigm of childhood' (p 7).

This paradigm moves away from concerns with the socialisation of the 'becoming child', to concern with the 'being child'. Brownlie (2001) echoes the concerns of Brannen and O'Brien (1996) that the new discourse may unintentionally construct children in a way that is unrealistic in relation to children's independence. Brownlie (2001) suggests that the construction of the 'being child' and the 'becoming child' are held in tension.

The idea that children experience dual status within society, as children now and as adults for the future, may help to explain why their opinions on policies related to physical punishment have not been sought in the past and why they have not been allowed to participate as equals within families.

However, more recently, over the last fifteen years, it seems some parents have sought to achieve a more equal relationship with their children compared to their own experience. Children increasingly are being enabled to participate in decision making within the family and children themselves regard this participation as appropriate (Mayall 2001).

Review of literature that conceptualised corporal punishment as a social phenomenon, rather than a parenting practice that was either harmful or not, has broadened the discussion about parents use of smacking. The influence of structural factors such as religion, legislature and the media on parents' beliefs and practice intersect with concepts about children's rights. In placing children's rights centrally in discussion about parenting practices has allowed sociological discussion to move on to consider a fundamental issue, that of relationship and the way in which relationships between adults and children within families appear to be changing from a position that regards children as essentially unequal with adults to one that values reciprocity. Although these ideas are theorised in the sociological literature, I did not find empirical research that explored the experience of families who intergenerationally or intragenerationally have changed their disciplinary practices in parallel with positioning children as equal partners within the family. Therefore there is a need for qualitative research in this area.

2:8 HOW HAVE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS' CONCEPTUALISED SMACKING ?

Within the following section, health visitors presented arguments for and against smacking that and other health care professionals are explored. Their sometimes conflicting views are informed by psychological research and by sociology and mirror what has been discussed within the previous two categories of literature. Inconclusive findings from the literature about health visitors attitudes towards smacking provided a rationale for investigating their

personal stories; from within their professional context as health visitors and from their perspective as parents for this doctoral study.

Reflecting back on the health visiting situation I recounted in the preface to this thesis, when I was challenged to think about changing expectations of parents and health visitors in relation to advice offered about disciplinary practices, I realised my own beliefs about the use of smacking have been shaped in a number of ways; my own experience as a child of parents who rarely smacked, my own experience as a parent and also what I had learned in my health visiting studies. Reflection on my health visiting practice prompted me to explore the literature on health visitors' beliefs about smacking and the different interventions that are used with families that seek help on parenting issues. I remember that sometimes parents of toddlers would sometimes ask me the question, 'when should I start to smack?' There are a number of assumptions in this question; firstly that children need to be smacked to be taught right from wrong, to correct unwanted behaviour and secondly that smacking was the best or only way to discipline children. It also seemed as though parents were asking for guidance on distinguishing between 'normal' exploratory behaviour and 'naughtiness'. This initial question was often followed up with a concern that they felt under pressure from peers or relatives from the previous generation to smack and what they wanted from me, the health visitor, was permission to say no to smacking and to explore alternatives.

The literature reviewed sometimes presents disparate views about the effects of smacking, determinants of smacking and different approaches to understanding children's rights. It is possible, that because of these

disagreements or inconsistencies, professional bodies, such as The Royal College of Nursing and professional groups such as health visitors, have not in the past spoken with a unified voice about parents' use of smacking and have not always been clear about the advice that they give to parents (Taylor and Redman 2004). In the following section, healthcare professionals' beliefs and attitudes about parents' use of smacking, according to the literature reviewed, are explored.

Opinion articles and editorials that expressed the views of either individual practitioners or professional organisations such as the Community Practitioner and Health Visitor Association, rather than empirical research papers were predominant within the nursing and medical literature. These opinion articles suggest the attitudes of health care professionals such as health visitors, school nurses and paediatricians on the issue of smacking children for disciplinary purposes are varied (Gleeson 2002). This is hardly surprising on two counts. Firstly, as members of society, they too have been influenced by historical and political contexts of debate about smacking over time and have interpreted their own experiences as children and/or as parents. Secondly, arguments from the field of psychology, though in agreement that smacking may cause short-term pain and should be non-injurious, have not provided nurses, health visitors and doctors with a clear mandate on which to draw for advice about the effects of smacking on children.

The role of health visitors is diverse, and is underpinned by structured health needs assessment of individual, family and community need, and by developing appropriate intervention in response to the findings (Cowley and Billings 1999).

Unlike other health and social care professionals, health visitors enjoy the unique position of offering a universal service to all families throughout the life course. They visit both 'healthy families' and vulnerable families. Whittaker and Cowley (2003) suggest that the practice of parenting support should be part of the health visitors' public health role. With this in mind, it seemed likely health visitors' views about the use of smacking within the family might be documented within the literature. However, there are few empirically derived findings about health visitors' views on parents' use of smacking. No studies were found that explored the relationship between health visitors' personal history, experience and professional practice. One study was found that surveyed teachers' attitudes about child maltreatment including the use of smacking (Kenny 2004). Findings indicated that younger professionals were more likely to approve of physical discipline than older professionals who had smacked their own children. Older professionals were more likely to refute the use of smacking as a disciplinary practice. It is not clear from this study if it is an age variable or the experience of having children that is associated with approval of physical discipline. Younger parents may also refute the use of smacking while older professionals that do not have children of their own may support its use.

What seems to be missing in the nursing literature is any sustained debate, or direction at anything more than a superficial level. Where there is engagement in the debate, it seems that there is concern among some health visitors that action to prevent children being smacked might undermine their relationship with the family. Moves to end smacking as a form of child discipline might be seen as an unwelcome intrusion into family life (Bidmead and Cottam 2000). To help and empower families, Cottam (in a debate presented in Bidmead and

Cottam 2000) argues the importance of developing a professional relationship based on mutual trust and non-judgemental interaction. Rather than imposing personal beliefs on a family, which may undermine parental decision-making, it is more important for the health visitor to support the preferred method of child discipline, while putting the well being of the child first. However, since most parents either lose control when they smack, driven by frustration, or because they just do not know what else to do and are sometimes unsure about the limits of 'reasonable chastisement', smacking is neither effective nor safe ((Lyon 2000, Spencer 2000, Waterston 2000)).

A contrasting perspective on smacking, held by some health visitors, and presented by Bidmead, in the Bidmead and Cottam debate (2000) suggests it is the moral duty of health visitors to safeguard the interests of vulnerable clients. Since it is argued, smacking is an abuse of adults' power and there is agreement that it is part of the nurse's role to act as an advocate for the disempowered, smacking should be opposed. From Bidmead's perspective, children are considered to have the same rights as adults with regard to freedom from physical violence. Furthermore, Bidmead argues that the use of smacking represents a parental role model that conveys to the child, hitting is an appropriate way to express negative feelings.

Debate in the health care arena distills the issue further and has two main elements. Firstly, whether or not it is morally or ethically right to use smacking as a form of discipline; and, secondly, the related question of whether the use of legislation to outlaw smacking is appropriate. Those in support of the non-

injurious use of smacking did not always support a legislative ban on its use by parents. Some health visitors are concerned that, if legislation outlaws smacking, they will be required to contact the police should they witness it, and that the consequences of this may prove to be more injurious to the child than the smack (Gulland 1999).

Arguments presented which disagreed with an outright ban on smacking sought to justify its use as 'an act of love' by caring parents (Scholes 1999). Other authors, writing from a medical perspective, highlighted the disruption caused in public places by children who are not disciplined adequately (Duff 2000; Philips 2000) and point out that smacking provides a structured outlet for parental anger, acting as a 'safety valve' (Alcorn 2000). Inhibiting smacking was seen as having the potential to allow other more harmful sorts of parental behaviour (Price 2000). Proponents of these arguments suggest that by overturning the concept of 'reasonable punishment', parents may be de-skilled.

Additionally, Wadeson (1993) and Hain (2000) argue that, because most parents smack as a last resort when they have lost control rather than as a planned, consistent strategy for discipline, changes to legislation which make smacking illegal are unlikely to be effective. Instead, health care professionals who work with families and communities are pivotal in helping to bring about changes in attitudes towards smacking through public health intervention or, at the individual level, in enabling and providing anticipatory guidance for parents about positive and workable alternatives. Gleeson (2002) suggests that paediatric nurses, health visitors and school nurses are ideally placed to give such guidance to parents since a key component of their professional education

is about placing childhood behaviours within the context of child development.

Wadeson (1993) used an argument based upon recognition of socio-economic factors to warn against the possibility that socially excluded families, including some lone parents and families from ethnic minorities would be disproportionately represented in the courts if laws were passed that banned the use of smacking. Wadeson's rationale draws upon other work that suggests that parenting in poverty is associated with higher levels of stress and child abuse. Social problems related to low income, demographic disruption and poor external supports are widely regarded as risk factors that may influence violence within the family (Belsky1993; Garbarino1980; Garbarino 2005; Halme et al 2006; Sidebotham 2001; Taylor and Baldwin 2000).

Similarly, Gillies (2006) in her qualitative study exploring social capital amongst working class and middle class parents of eight to twelve year old children, found clear relationships between resources held by particular parents and the child rearing practices that they pursued. Gillies concluded that policy makers and health and social care professionals that work with families must be cognisant with the different ways in which parents cope with social disadvantage and the way their parenting practices are grounded in day to day social reality. Gillies warns, interventions such as Sure Start, that are aimed at socially excluded parents to regulate parenting activities, when used as part of a parenting order could act as a form of authoritarian control. It is logical then, that socially excluded families may by nature of the relationship between stressful everyday lives and parenting practice be more likely to be controlled by the state (Edwards and Gillies 2004). Although Gillies does not make the connection between social disadvantage and enactment of any law that outlaws

physical punishment of children, it is implied according to the above logic. Similarly, Straus and Mathur (2005) drew stark conclusions from their study findings; that if socio-economic inequalities persist then continued inequality in experience of physical punishment might mean efforts to end physical punishment of children by legislative means could be seen by disadvantaged groups as an attempt to control their lives.

An alternative perspective is offered by Barlow (2010), who suggests that a public health approach to prevention of child abuse is required. Implications for adopting approaches that aim to change behaviour universally, primary prevention rather than secondary prevention have a number of positive advantages for society as a whole and for individual parents and children. Within the umbrella of primary prevention, legislative change in accordance with the UNCRC for a complete ban on smacking is seen to be crucial in changing societal behavioural norms and improvement of outcomes for children. At community level, Barlow suggests that supportive parenting programmes that foster sensitive parenting should be offered to all parents, not only those who present with difficulties in child rearing or whose children have emotional or behavioural problems. This universal approach has the advantage of being non-stigmatising. Furthermore, such approaches are in accordance with the key tenets of current government policies such as 'Every Child Matters (DSCF 2004) and Better Health Better Care (Scottish Government 2007) and the most recent, Healthy Lives, Healthy People (HM Government 2010) in which emphasis is shifted from treatment to prevention.

Few empirical studies were found that reported upon the effectiveness of parenting programmes in changing parents attitudes and practice in relation to their use of smacking. However, evidence for the effectiveness of parenting programmes in preventing emotional and behavioural problems in children under three years of age was investigated in a meta-analysis of five different research studies (Barlow, Parsons & Stewart-Brown 2005). Although most of the finding of this analysis were related to positive behaviour scores amongst the children involved, one of the studies (Nicholson et al 1998) also found that as a result of the programme, parents reported they used less verbal and corporal punishment when using the cognitive –behavioural strategies learned within the parenting programme and this change in parenting behaviour continued beyond the parenting programme time frame.

Support for more positive approaches to child discipline were implicit in a number of articles which reported upon health visitors' use of evidence based educational parenting programmes such as 'Triple P ' (Positive Parenting Programme developed in Australia) and an approach developed in the UK, the 'Solihull Approach' (Sanders and Turner 2005; Whitehead and Douglas 2005; Milford et al 2006; Stewart- Brown 2006). Both the 'Triple P' and Solihull approach have been positively evaluated by health visitors in the UK according to a number of small-scale qualitative studies. Incidentally, it was these particular interventions that were described in participants' narratives within the current doctoral study; thereby are relevant to this literature review.

In brief, the aims of both the 'Triple P' programme and the 'Solihull' approach is to empower parents, increase their competence and parenting skills and to help

prevent behavioural and emotional problems amongst children and young people. Included in the 'Triple P' programme are community based interventions such as parenting groups for parents experiencing difficulties in managing children's behaviour and that rely on behavioural intervention, that is secondary prevention, as well as other groups offered to all parents as a primary prevention strategy (Sanders and Turner 2005).

There are three key elements to the Solihull approach, concepts of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management. Containment is a concept drawn from psychoanalysis and is a process in which the parent is enabled to manage their own anxieties and emotions and in turn the parent learns how to help the child process their emotions rather than being overwhelmed by them.

The concept of reciprocity as used within the Solihull approach although different, is associated with the idea of reciprocity discussed previously (Mayall 2001). Within the Solihull approach, reciprocity refers to the way parents and infants learn to communicate their needs to one another, a fundamental process in the development of attachment. Reciprocity, as described by Mayall (2001) and previously by O'Neill (1994) goes beyond the goal of fostering attachment amongst parents and infants, to recognition that within families, parents and children are of equal value and that children have a need to be understood but also have capacity for negotiation.

Behaviour management strategies adopted within the Solihull approach aim to foster positive reward rather than negative, inconsistent parental behaviour. One study, which although small, lends support for health visitors' use of

strategies that foster containment and reciprocity was conducted by Whitehead and Douglas (2005). Their study was a service evaluation of health visitors' experience of using the Solihull approach. Semi-structured interviews were used with four health visitors and thirteen families. Results demonstrated a significant reduction in anxiety about the behaviour for parents. Although this is a very small scale-study, one of the key messages drawn from the findings is one that I feel is an important area for further research, as it can be assumed that if behavioural problems were perceived to have improved, then parents may be less likely to resort to punitive measures such as smacking. Health visitors reported that in using the approach they felt they had a greater understanding of the problem and that when containment and reciprocity were in place then often the behavioural problem was addressed.

Although some empirical studies were found that sought to measure the effectiveness of interventions used by health visitors to foster positive and sensitive parenting, no studies were found that specifically evaluated how either the Triple P programme or the Solihull programme influenced change in parents' use of corporal punishment. According to opinion papers reviewed, health visitors and other health care professionals seem to hold competing views on parents' use of physical punishment and the nature of smacking. These disparate views are not surprising since the discipline of psychology, which supports much health visiting practice, does not offer a unified view about the short or long-term effects of smacking, as previously discussed. Other health care professionals have rejected such arguments and instead their beliefs and practice is informed by recognition of children's rights to equal

protection from assault. Although opinion papers were identified, this review of the literature suggests that there is little empirical research about health visitors' beliefs and attitudes on smacking, from either the context of their professional sphere or their personal sphere.

2:9 SUMMARY

The three broad categories of literature reviewed represent wide ranging theoretical perspectives on smacking. Issues about parents' use of smacking go much deeper than opinions about relative harm or its effectiveness. They are deeply embedded in cultural practices and shared beliefs, religious affiliation, law and social policy. In other words, although children and parents experience corporal punishment at an ordinary every day level, wider social factors, such as shared understandings of the social positioning of children over time, are highly influential in determining what is normative in society (James and Prout 1997; Mayall 1998; Wyness 2006).

Ideas about the use of smacking by parents are not straightforward. A number of inter-related factors rather one single factor may influence parental use of physical punishment, according to the literature. Issues about the effectiveness of smacking, the consequences of smacking, both short term and long term, intersect with ideas about children's rights and their social position.

This literature has informed debate about possible harmful effects of parents' use of physical punishment from a developmental psychological perspective and has informed understandings of the social context of parents' use of

smacking. The psychological research on parental use of physical punishment has tended to rely upon quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. While this may allow for large-scale study of the phenomenon, it has limitations.

According to the literature reviewed, there are conflicting opinions about the role of legislation to completely ban parental use of smacking. Some commentators, adopting a public health approach, have suggested that legislation may raise public awareness about children's rights and may persuade the public that smacking children is wrong and may alter societal norms in parenting behaviour. While others strongly oppose such measures stating these laws will criminalise loving parents and furthermore, parents who need the most support are likely to be disproportionately represented in the courts.

The literature review has revealed a number of gaps in research about parents' use of smacking. Some of these gaps are related to methodology and others to what is understood about the phenomenon. The literature review did not reveal any studies that adopted a biographical narrative approach to answering questions about the nature of smacking as a form of parental discipline. Instead, previous qualitative studies have relied upon the use of semi-structured questionnaires that do not allow the participant to take control of how they tell their story. A more nuanced qualitative approach is required to answer questions as to how this use of physical punishment is experienced over time in the story of a life, in order to understand how participants make connections between the past and the present. Enabling participants' to narrate their autobiographies in a way that is unfettered by pre determined questions set by the researcher, may allow new knowledge to be generated. Further discussion

about the relative merits of narrative biographical approaches and the use of semi-structured interviews can be found in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

Ideas about changing attitudes towards children, childhood, children's rights and physical punishment in the home have been discussed within the arenas of sociology and anthropology. Sociological discourse has moved debate about smacking on from consideration of smacking and any psychological outcomes for children, and from exploration of cultural factors, to one that places children's rights centre stage. There is agreement that societal views about the use of physical punishment in the home have changed over time, in parallel with conventions that recognise children's human rights. However, information about how these changes have been understood by individuals within families and how parenting behaviour may have been modified, within the context of lifecourse narratives, is absent from the literature.

Although a small number of studies that explored media representation of child abuse were discovered, the paucity of research on media representation of smacking was surprising. Issues about parents' use of smacking seems to be an emotive topic with many people keen to voice their opinion when the subject is aired in conversation (personal experience) or by the media. The response of audiences of television and radio programmes that have tackled this subject bear testimony to continuing interest in the topic. Further research is required to explore how media discourse about parents' use of smacking has been constructed.

Opinion papers have described competing views held by health visitors and other health care professionals on parents' use of physical punishment. However, this review of the literature suggests that there is little empirical research about their beliefs and attitudes on smacking from either the context of their professional sphere or their personal sphere.

The overarching themes found within the literature that relate to different ways that smacking has been conceptualised from within competing perspectives and which have changed over time, are carried forward to discussion in the following chapters in the context of study participants life story narratives.

This doctoral study uses a qualitative methodology and narrative approaches to explore the gaps in previous research about changing societal discourse on smacking and how in parallel, families have experienced the social construction and reconstruction of smacking over time. The use of a narrative approach to explore what is for some a sensitive subject, will allow a greater depth of understanding about the sorts of processes, or what Mayall (2000) has referred to as the 'different constellations' that have influenced change or continuity within the lives of individuals.

The research question has been developed to allow exploration of media representation of smacking and also parents' and professionals' biographical narratives in a way that takes account of ideas about generation and relationship.

How do parents', grandparents' and health visitors' narratives diverge or converge with changing societal narratives about the use of smacking by parents in the UK?

The aims of this doctoral study are to discover:

- How the print media contribute to societal discourse about parents' use of smacking.
- The contexts of parents' and grandparents' understandings of smacking within the framework of biographical narrative.
- How concepts of generation, reciprocity and relationship are played out within families in Scotland.
- How health visitors make sense of smacking as professional caregivers and health promoters and also from their more personal perspective as parents or grandparents.

The study design and methods, which have been used to explore the questions proposed, are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

All colours when placed in the shade appear of an equal degree of darkness among themselves. Placed in the light they never vary from their true and essential hue.

(Leonardo da Vinci c.1490)

3:1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to explain the theoretical position that underpins this study and also to present a pragmatic rationale for the study design and the methods that were used to answer the research question:

How do parents', grandparents' and health visitors' narratives diverge or converge with changing societal narratives about the use of smacking by parents in the UK?

Leonardo da Vinci eloquently described the effect of light upon colour; an analogy maybe for the way in which a creative qualitative methodology can throw light upon a multifaceted topic, and can allow the reader to share the interpretation of the findings offered by the writer. However, where I may depart from the analogy with da Vinci's quotation is regarding the nature of truth and knowledge; and the assumption that there really is 'one true and essential hue'. This is an issue that will be referred to later in this chapter.

The choice of methods was influenced by a number of factors including personal beliefs about the nature of social reality, how new knowledge can be developed and made known, the nature of the research question itself, and pragmatic considerations about how the question may be answered within

particular constraints such as accessibility and resources (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the qualitative researcher as a collage maker 'a bricoleur', one who superimposes one 'image' upon another to create something new, or to piece together images to make a picture. This metaphor describes the way in which a researcher may "work within and between overlapping perspectives and paradigms" (p.6). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert, approaches to doing qualitative research do not always occupy discreet pigeonholes, but in practice, a research study may incorporate aspects of a number of approaches. This is not simply an eclecticism in which strands from different approaches are applied to the study in an ad hoc fashion but instead are in some way integrated as part of the bricolage. The aim of this chapter is to explain the methodological rationale for this study; how this bricolage works, the integration of the whole; the relationship between the underpinning philosophy of the methodological framework and the methods used.

3:2 TRUTH, REALITY AND KNOWLEDGE

This study is underpinned philosophically by the Social Interactionist paradigm. Epistemologically the study draws upon *Interpretivism* and ontologically, *social constructivism*. These theoretical positions form the philosophical basis of this study and have informed emergent decisions about data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation of the findings and their presentation. I use the term emergent purposefully, as I experienced the meaning of using a 'flexible design' first hand with an amount of insecurity. There were times during this study when I felt as though I was 'making it up as I went along', as at each

stage in the study I read more about the experiences of other authors and thought critically about different approaches to conducting data collection and constantly moved iteratively between data gathering, analysis, interpretation and the literature in what Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to as the *hermeneutic dialectical circle*. I was reassured by Morse (2008,p.1336) who states that although a research proposal allows you to do 'an armchair walk through' that can help to steer things in the right direction, the study of complex phenomena demands an emergent design.

This study uses a qualitative methodology and an approach that is broadly ethnographic. The term, '*naturalistic Inquiry*' is often used synonymously with the term '*ethnography*', 'since both imply field research. It is naturalistic in that the research setting has not been constructed for the purpose of the research but instead takes place in a natural setting, where real life situations can be explored and understood (Lincoln and Guba 1985: Mason 2002). It is appropriate to use naturalistic inquiry since the aims of the study are to explore and to interpret attitudes and beliefs within a specific social context.

Providing an explanation of my personal ontological and epistemological position is a challenge since belief about the social nature of the social world 'seems so fundamental and obvious' (Mason 2002, p.14). Willig (2001) and Finlay (2003) offer support for epistemological reflexivity; the view that it is important to make clear ones own philosophical position in order to clarify assumptions made about the study design and the implications of the philosophical position for the interpretation of findings. Within the concept of reflexivity is the assumption that there are different philosophical positions and

that these make a difference to choices made about methods, and how data should be interpreted. For example, the brief discussion that follows, about the philosophical framework that underpins this study, provides the rationale for my choosing to use narrative methods to explore the research question. Contained within this chapter is an account of how I have sought to reflexively explore a number of methodological challenges for the purpose of this doctoral study.

For the novice researcher an initial challenge is to tease out and to understand the many different terms that are used to label competing and complementary theoretical positions: paradigms, approaches and traditions. Different authors offer different viewpoints about how they describe the above. For instance Sarantakos (2005) suggests that the following are examples of paradigms: positivism, social interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and feminism. However, Patton (2002) describes the major paradigms within social science as positivism and phenomenology. Later in his text Patton describes phenomenology, social interactionism, constructionism/social constructivism and ethnography as examples of *theoretical traditions*.

Patton (2002) suggests that the different qualitative frameworks can be distinguished by their answers to six key questions or what Mason (2002) refers to as puzzles, as follows:

- What is believed about the nature of reality?
- How do we know what we know?
- How should we study the world?
- What is worth knowing?
- What are the burning questions that should be asked?

- How should the researcher personally engage in inquiry?

It is the intention of this chapter to seek to answer these questions in relation to this study, though not necessarily in the above sequence as these issues often overlap and are interrelated.

3:2:1 Social Interactionism

It is this broad overarching philosophical paradigm that informs the research methodology of this study and that is the basis for my ontological and epistemological position. According to Blumer (1969), one of the founding fathers of social interactionism (see Patton 2002), three premises are fundamental to this paradigm. Firstly, human actions towards things are based upon the meanings these things have for them. Secondly, meanings of things emanate from human social interaction, and thirdly, meanings that are ascribed to things are modified by individuals by a dynamic process of interpretation: dynamic in that meanings ascribed to objects, language and actions change over time.

These premises have guided the study design, including decisions to collect data using a biographical narrative approach to interviewing. The idea that participant's biographical narratives contain 'truths' worth understanding and that these 'truths' are not fixed in time or are in some way universal, is crucial to answering the research question.

Social Interactionism's concern with the way in which signs and symbols are used within language to convey meaning, underpins the analysis of linguistic

signs and symbols used within the print media's representation of parents' use of smacking. Similarly, analysis of the structural content of participants' narratives, the language used and the way in which talk was produced is also underpinned by social interactionism in accordance with all three premises. A key premise of social interactionism is that meanings change over time. This premise informed the use of biographical narratives, which allowed participants to recount how their own definitions of smacking had changed over time and to make intergenerational comparisons. In this way, connections were made with experiences in the past that were perceived to have influenced current values and behaviour, personal interpretations about 'what is going on'.

3:2:2 Social Constructivism

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Sarantakos (2005), the ontological basis for social interactionism is the theory of constructivism. The key tenet of this theory is the belief that there is neither objective reality nor objective truth, no single 'true and essential hue'. Instead, knowledge about reality is constructed and reconstructed over time, amongst societies and within the individual's own life course.

Within the literature, the terms social constructionism and social constructivism seem to be used interchangeably. However, Crotty (1998) distinguishes between constructivism and constructionism. The former relates to the individual's unique construction of meaning and social constructionism refers to the collective generation and transmission of meaning in and by society. Both the individual's construction of meaning and the collective generation of meaning are pertinent to this study. Crotty's distinction between constructivism

and constructionism form part of the rationale for exploring societal discourse about parents' use of smacking as represented in print media narratives in the first part of the study and for exploring individuals' understandings of smacking within the context of biographical narratives in the second part.

That meanings are not fixed but emerge out of people's interaction with the world, for me offers a potentially optimistic perspective, in that it becomes possible to envisage both change within individual life courses and within society as a whole. This idea is captured by the participant Laura (a mainland parent), in her descriptions of her own change in thinking about the way she wanted to be a parent, initially socialising her children towards non-violent communication and by changing society by a 'ripple effect' (see Exemplar Four, Chapter Seven p.295).

Constructing reality means making accounts of the world around us and gaining impressions based upon culturally defined and historically situated interpretations and personal experiences (Gergan, 1999).

Therefore it follows that the impression of reality gained by researchers who listen to participants' stories in interview situations for example, are subjective re- constructions of the constructed reality of the participant. Interpretation and re-construction allows identification of meaning that is understood in relation to various contexts; historical, cultural and personal experience as points of reference. Cultural influences, such as the influence of the mass media upon the collective generation of meaning and more specifically about their influence upon the collective meaning ascribed to smacking behaviour is the subject of discussion in Chapter Four of this thesis.

However, while there may indeed be collective meaning assigned to objects and events, that are relayed through processes of socialisation for example, the challenge for the researcher is to recognise the potential for different interpretations and misinterpretation of meaning rather than assuming a shared interpretation of events and hence meanings ascribed to these. The implications of this are to emphasise the need for the researcher to be reflective, reflexive and to seek clarification about the interpretation of the stories from participants and with reference to the literature (Sandelowski 1991).

3:2:3 Interpretivism

This is the epistemological framework for qualitative research according to Crotty (1998 p67):

It (qualitative research) looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world.

The aim is to learn the 'special views of actors', the local meaning (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). This is the subjective meaning of participants rather than the acceptance of an objective universal truth such as that valued within a positivist paradigm. For the researcher informed by an interpretivist epistemology, a number of factors are important; cultural prescriptions, the social order and social structures that give rise to particular conditions. Therefore, in the light of this epistemological position, how these factors (cultural prescription, social structures and the social order) bear upon media representation of smacking and participants' narratives of everyday lives is fundamental to their analysis and interpretation within the current doctoral study.

On thinking about the above factors in relation to this study, a number of questions that in part were raised in the literature review and that continued as threads within analysis of narratives include:

- What are the cultural prescriptions relating to parents' use of smacking parents in the UK today and in the past?
- Who prescribes: Individuals, organisations, media of various genres, religious organisations, policy makers and legislators or other socialisation processes?
- The social order: What sort of rights do children have? What is the social position of children? How does UK society value childhood? In legislative terms how do adult's rights accord with children's rights?
- Social structures: How do structural factors such as the legislature, influence the production of meaning?

At the beginning of this chapter a number of questions or puzzles were posed, including, how should the researcher personally engage in inquiry? Reflecting upon this question, I believe that it is essentially referring to personal reflexivity, a concept that in my understanding is absolutely entwined with Interpretivism and ideas about representation. In the discussion that follows, the relationship of reflexivity with Interpretivism within the context of narrative methods is theorised.

3:2:4 The Position of the Researcher as Interpreter and Writer

Clifford Gheertz (1988), in his book, 'Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author', discusses this at length in terms of 'the crisis of ethnographic representation' (p.130). The report, the writing, takes on a life of it's own; it is

this that is read and becomes the study rather than the actual experience of doing the research. He suggests there is a dilemma for the cultural anthropologist or ethnographer, in representing a culture that is unknown to an audience and this is equally a problem for the ethnographer trying to present an everyday situation that is from within their own cultural context as in the present study. What Gheertz alludes to here is the notion of personal reflexivity; the recognition that the researcher can only offer their interpretation in the light of their own experience or tacit knowledge. Nightingale and Cromby (p228) reiterate the point that it is impossible to remain 'outside' the subject matter when conducting research. The idea of somehow dichotomising self, or 'bracketing' ones own thoughts; feelings, influence of previous experience in order to attempt to achieve objectivity, is anathema to the personal reflexivity stance.

This theme is taken up by Guba and Lincoln (1989), who suggest that the researcher inevitably brings to the study their own tacit knowledge of the phenomena and who then through the generosity of the participants is allowed to enter their world vicariously and to come to an understanding of phenomena that is often taken for granted or as common sense. In writing the report the researcher seeks to make the ordinary extraordinary, and allows the reader to gain vicarious experience also. There is a resonance here with the smacking debate (see literature review). Parents' use of physical punishment with their children has up until fairly recently been taken for granted as a legitimate and usual behaviour. The task of the researcher in the present study is to explore and to illuminate interpretively, the extraordinary.

In the written ethnography there is something of the author and this should be acknowledged reflexively (Gheertz 1988). The writing is an integral part of the research, not only as part of the process but also as a method because in the writing, the theoretical position of the writer about the nature of knowledge, truth, and the place given to credibility and trustworthiness is exposed. The author has to decide, 'how should this be written?' However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005 p 1050) warn against the possibility that 'an enormous amount of self referential text can be produced with little reference to concrete human experience'.

The notion of 'personal reflexivity' seems to be fundamental to Interpretivism. According to Nightingale and Crombie (1999) personal reflexivity involves reflecting on ways in which the researchers own values and experience may shape the study. It sits alongside epistemological reflexivity but the focus is upon personal experience and tacit knowledge rather than philosophical views about the nature of truth and knowledge. Throughout this methodology chapter I draw attention to a number specific concerns in relation to interpreting narrative and presenting the findings in a way that relates to awareness of my own position as interpreter and writer and the relationship between the researcher and the researched. For example, as I reflected upon the nature of qualitative interviews I became increasingly aware of issues about equity in the relationship between the researcher and participant and the need to consider how such an unequal relationship could be mitigated. What I mean here is the need to recognise that the researcher is in a potentially powerful position. For example, I had developed the research questions and had set the agenda for the interviews, made decisions about how they were to be analysed and

subsequently re-presented as text. When I reflected on the interview data, I found evidence of this unequal partnership: participants would sometimes ask, 'Is this OK, is this the sort of thing that you want?'

Some aspects of inequity were mitigated by the choice of interviewing method, in that within the scope of a narrative interview, participants can choose what to include and what to miss out in a way that is less likely when more structured approaches are used. A related point is that in the same way participants made connections between events or personal experience and their own understandings of smacking, as they recounted their narratives and sometimes in the telling came to a new understanding of the phenomena, I too began to question my own position about the nature of smacking. Reflecting on this, the idea that the researcher may be changed as a result of the study is at once a little unnerving (as one's position is challenged) but in another way emancipatory, in that participants potentially have power to bring about change.

Within qualitative research traditions, there are polarised views about how data should be interpreted and the level to which the researcher demonstrates self-awareness of their influence upon the process. For example, although Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) accept that interpretation of meaning is by nature subjective, they suggest that culture be understood and interpreted from an *emic* perspective, that is, from the viewpoint of the participant and that interpretation is external to and independent of the researcher in a kind of existential way. To this end, findings could be presented in such a way that the writer is transparent and written up as simply the stories of the participants.

Sandelowski and Barroso (2003) suggest that according to their definition of what constitutes findings, presentation of data in which the researcher does not offer any interpretation or pronouncements, simply allowing the data to 'speak for it's self' cannot be regarded as findings:

Findings are the data-driven and integrated discoveries, judgements or pronouncements that researchers offer about the phenomenon, events or cases under investigation (Sandelowski and Barroso 2003 p.909).

However, the justification offered by those that present findings in this way is that it is an attempt to give voice to those who often go unheard, and it is assumed that meaning is inherent and needs no further explanation by the researcher (Nijhof 1997). Reflecting upon this, in the quest to find a way to present the data as findings in their purest form, unadulterated by any subjective interpretation the researcher might bring to them, the above approach at first seems tempting. However, this is problematic because the data is the product of the representation and re-representation of events and their meanings over a timescale for the individual and they are situated within a specific social context that is likely to be different to that of the reader (Wolcott 1994). The emic perspective is a point for contention, since without self-awareness on the part of the researcher, truth and transparency are compromised. Hammersley and Atkinson present a dilemma for the researcher who is part of the culture that is being studied and yet who is also an observer.

Although Atkinson and Hammersley suggest that the ethnography should be presented from this emic perspective, it is assumed by Gergan (1991) that reflexivity using a more etic perspective, recognising ones own position as an

'insider', is wholly congruent with social constructionist ideology (the ontological position that underpins this doctoral study), since there is recognition of how shared understandings of phenomena are constructed. A potential limitation to personal reflexivity, however, is the concern that in looking introspectively at one's own experiences, it may be difficult to see beyond this perspective to that of the participant.

An alternative position to that of Atkinson and Hammersley (1995) is offered by Arvay (2003) who adopted a collaborative approach to doing narrative research. Arvay's approach both encourages self-awareness and also fosters equity amongst researcher and researched. In a very personal account, Arvay described how in her study, she adopted the term co-collaborator rather than participant to help achieve equity at every step in the research study journey. The views of co-collaborators were sought in the planning of the narrative interview, how they should be read and agreement sought about possible interpretation of findings. A final step, suggested by a co-collaborator, was for the researcher to take on the voice of the researched by reading the transcribed narrative out loud with co-collaborator as audience. Arvay describes this process as empathetic and emancipatory but also sometimes painful. Arvay's approach to narrative interviewing raised important issues about the extent to which I was able to foster equity in my study and how I could demonstrate reflexivity in my analysis and interpretation of narrative interviews.

There are however, limitations to Arvay's approach; it is time consuming, with at least four hours given over to each interview and some participants may not wish to be involved to this level. Given the limitations of these polarised

positions, for the purposes of this doctoral study a 'middle way' was adopted, that took into account issues about equity and also personal reflexivity.

Part of the process of understanding the perspective of the participants was first to acknowledge my own roles, experience and assumptions about the phenomenon, from my own position as a parent and as a health care professional (Health Visitor). This smacking phenomenon has been part of my own cultural experience; living in a society that has not only accepted that physical discipline is part of the parenting role but has in the past prescribed its use. As I listened to participants' narratives as researcher in the current doctoral study, there were points of resonance with my own narrative of being a mother, as I too, as a new parent had needed to make choices about disciplinary practice and had expectations about the sort of relationship I wanted to foster with my child that was sometimes in conflict with my peers. I did not share these inner thoughts with participants during interviews, as at the time I was concerned that sharing my own stories may be perceived to trivialise participants' narratives. However, to do so may have helped to contribute to a more equitable relationship between the researcher and the researched.

An alternative approach was to acknowledge the etic perspective by clearly stating where the interpretation of data is subjective; the interpretation of the researcher and also to reflexively present an account of my own experience of the phenomenon under study. One of the ways I have attempted to do this in this study by providing a short account of my own experience as a health visitor in the preface to this thesis. This is included firstly, because it was this experience as a health visitor that first sparked my interest in the parental use of

smacking phenomenon and secondly, the episode described is a clearly held memory of a significant event. The third reason is one of equity: if I have consent to ask participants to tell stories about their personal everyday lives then maybe I should narrate a situated significant event or two, since smacking is a phenomenon that has touched upon my life too, in the choices I made as a parent and in my experience as a health visitor.

I have been very conscious that this topic has continued to be publicly debated within a political arena and has also been the subject within a number of popular cultural genres during the period of this study. For my part as the researcher / anthropologist, in addition to reading the academic literature, I have taken care to listen to TV documentary and radio broadcasts as they have been presented, and to read and critique popular culture such as magazines in an ad hoc way as they have come to my attention. All of the sources when put together have contributed to my own understanding about our society's beliefs about smacking.

Notes about these additional forms of data have been kept in my research journal, and have added to my etic perspective. This has helped to inform my thinking during data collection and during analysis. Similarly, serendipitous conversations with people who expressed views about smacking, often outspoken, were noted in this journal. For example, a nursing acquaintance, on learning my study topic, emphatically stated, it was a lack of physical discipline in schools and in the home that was the cause of societal ills, children needed to be smacked. I remember being very surprised that such a view was voiced openly as I had not heard this opinion expressed amongst my own circle of health visiting colleagues. This interaction served as a reminder not to make

assumptions about how smacking may be conceptualised by nurses and health visitors, not all shared my view. In other words, although the smacking phenomenon has been part of my cultural experience and of others, it does not necessarily follow that there is shared understanding of the phenomena amongst health visitors and parents.

In the light of Gheertz (1988) in presenting the findings of this study I have attempted to present a truthful and credible account of the findings contained within the data by providing direct quotations from participant narratives. I have tried to be clear about what is my interpretation of events in relation to my own experience as a health visitor and parent and by situating the study findings within its social context. In doing this I have attempted to ensure that in 'transforming the data' interpretation has not gone beyond the data (Wolcott 1994 p.37). The use of personal reflexivity has helped to bring transparency to the analysis and interpretation of the data and to thus contribute to rigour.

Reflecting then upon Gheertz (1988), the task for me is to re-present this story of everyday behaviour to an audience of fellow observers and participants and to find the unusual in the usual. There is a tension between the authority that comes of 'knowing' a culture and the limitations of individual experience within this, being of the culture and yet attempting to stand apart to observe and to interpret, to re-present. The point is succinctly made in the following quotation:

Ethnography always has to struggle with the mis-relation of limited personal experience upon which the production of knowledge is based, and the claim for an authoritative knowledge about a whole culture, which it makes with its product, the texts (Fuchs and Berg, 1993 p73).

3:2:6 Defining Culture

I have used the term '*culture*' a number of times within this thesis. The term culture can be understood in a number of ways. Rather than understanding it in terms of the arts and literature, it will be used in this study to refer to the ways in which we make sense of the world, the system of shared meaning, representations and practices that are evident for instance in religious beliefs, ethnic identity and codes of behaviour.

Culture can be seen as an inherited 'lens' through which the individual perceives and understands the world ... and learns how to live within it. Growing up within any society is a form of enculturalisation, whereby the individual slowly acquires the cultural 'lens' of that society (Helman (2000, p2).

The definition of culture is often problematic, as it is often understood as 'otherness', something different or bizarre. More usefully, it can be understood in the way that it structures meaning for individuals. Cultural knowledge then, from a social interactionist perspective, is that which is shared within a community to guide beliefs and attitudes and with which to evaluate behaviour. Hence, smacking can be regarded as a cultural phenomenon, part of a shared experience of the past, which is supported by dominant understandings of the social positioning of children.

Parental smacking behaviours occur within the cultural context of our society. Similarly, the behaviours of health and social care practitioners who work with families, are influenced not only by the culture of the organisations that employ them, but also by the wider social context of UK society. According to anthropological theory, cultural behaviour occurs at three levels: what people

say they do, what they can be observed to do and the underlying belief system that drives that behaviour (Hall 1977; Rapport and Overing 2000). It is therefore imperative when studying issues that relate to smacking, to explore holistically some of the historical, political, economic and social factors that impinge upon the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of the actors within contemporary UK society (Taylor, Spencer and Baldwin 2000).

Challenges for me, the researcher, in relation to this study were to find research methods that allowed useful exploration of these levels of cultural behaviour: what people say they do, what they have experienced over the lifecourse as a child and as a parent and also to gain a sense of the individual's response to changing cultural prescriptions about parental use of physical punishment. It was the need to explore these fundamental aspects of culture and behaviour, the interconnections between social practices and overarching wider cultural principles, beliefs and values that formed the basis of the rationale for the methodological approach used within this study.

3:3 STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

This study was designed in two parts and utilises two different sources of data that seek to shed some light upon the primary research question proposed at the end of the literature review.

The first part of this study was designed to explore the representation of smacking by parents to children, in the print media. According to the literature review, media representation of smacking, unlike media representation of child abuse', is a topic that has been little researched. The first part of this study aims

to contribute to greater understanding of the way in which the print media are involved in the construction of discourse on smacking. The second part of the study was designed to explore how attitudes, beliefs and practice of parents, grandparents and health visitors about this use of smacking intersect with the wider social discourse on smacking.

The two parts of this study were conducted sequentially with the findings from Part One providing a milieu or backdrop for Part Two. In other words, the social world that is presented by the media was understood to be a representation of the social world in which participants of the study live their lives. My reading of the news stories that focused upon smacking, prior to conducting interviews with study participants, helped me to be aware of events and debate that had been in the media 'limelight' and to understand participants references to the reportage. The findings from the two parts of the study are presented separately but are integrated in the concluding discussion in the final chapter.

SUMMARY OF METHODS

Part One: Print Media Representation of Smacking

1. Selection of newspapers to be searched for relevant reportage.
2. Selection of newspaper articles.
3. Management and analysis of articles to allow identification of their main themes.

Part Two: Parent's, grandparent's and health visitor's narratives.

1. Recruitment and selection of parents and grandparents.
2. Recruitment and selection of health visitors.
3. Episodic narrative interviews with participants in South East Scotland.
4. Episodic narrative interviews with participants in the Scottish Western Isles
5. Transcribe interviews.
6. Paradigmatic analysis (analysis across the narratives).
7. Select narratives that will provide case exemplars.
8. Case exemplar analysis (analysis within selected narratives).
9. Integration of the findings from all parts of the study.

3:4 PART ONE: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF SMACKING

The media have a huge influence on the way the world around us is defined and also on our definitions of ourselves (Gripsud 2002; Silverstone 1994). The media represent the world in textual, visual and acoustic imagery and suggest to their readers ways to make sense of the world. They present ideas about what is and what is not acceptable, what is important and what is not. A number of socio-ecological factors that include the mass media, along with other cultural factors, operate within a two way process upon individuals (Sidebotham 2001).

It is therefore likely that the media will influence the construction of our identity as parents, or the parent we should like to be and societies' expectations of parenting. The media may also offer to their consumers, ideas about the nature of childhood and the appropriateness of the use of physical discipline on children. These assumptions are underpinned by values and premises within the social interactionist paradigm (see p.68) and ontologically by social constructionism (in accordance with Crotty's definition see p. 69).

According to King and Watson (2005), the notion that the many different statements and opinions presented in the print media produce knowledge and meaning, is important when analysing media texts. According to this Social Constructionist perspective, it seems logical that social behaviour, amongst both parents and healthcare professionals is likely to be influenced by the media.

To summarise, inclusion of print media texts as a source of data was driven by the research question and by the following assumptions and premises.

- The print media are influential in both reflecting and shaping contemporary societal views.
- The views and thus perhaps the practices of parents and health care professionals such as health visitors, are likely to be influenced by representations (of smacking) in the print media.

2:4:1 Part One: Data Collection

Using the Lexis Nexis database (an electronic database of international, national and local newspapers), 244 newspaper articles about parents' use of smacking with their children, from five different UK and Scottish newspapers were obtained. These newspapers were *The Herald*, a liberal Scottish broadsheet; the *Daily Record*, a left-wing Scottish tabloid; *The Daily Telegraph*, a right-wing UK broadsheet; *The Independent*, a liberal UK paper and *The Sun*, a left-wing UK tabloid. These particular papers were chosen because they represent what Hall et al (1978, p54) termed 'the different cultural personalities' of newspapers: tabloid, broadsheet, the reading ability and interests of their readership, political alliance and editorial choice and thereby were likely to represent a diverse audience. It was important to choose Scottish newspapers in addition to UK papers since not all stories of events taking place in Scotland are included in UK reportage. Local newspapers were excluded for pragmatic reasons and also because they do not always report upon and comment on wider social issues and events. In order to allow the amount of data to be of a manageable amount, only five national newspapers were chosen.

All newspaper articles about the use of smacking by parents to discipline their children in the years 2004, 1999, 1994 and 1989 were selected. These dates

were chosen for both practical and purposive reasons. Firstly, it is only possible to access the past 20 years of published newspapers using this database. Secondly, through preliminary sampling it became clear this was a topic that had received little or no news coverage prior to 1989. Newspapers published in 2004 were selected, as this was a time when there was much media interest in the subject due to recent legislative changes, and was the year in which this study commenced. Five yearly sampling intervals allowed the amount of data retrieved to be manageable. The aim of selection was not to obtain a representative sample, but simply to identify the discourse as it was presented over time.

The articles included headlines, comment and opinion articles, descriptive news items and letters from readers. Headlines were included as they are designed to attract the attention of readers and often summarise the content of the text that follows. Readers' letters were included as they were likely to provide a unique and rich source of data, which could provide insights into their attitudes and beliefs about the use of smacking as part of a two-way dialogue.

A number of different search terms were used to reflect different euphemisms for hitting. This was to ensure that no relevant articles were missed. For example, these terms included smacking, slapping, spanking, corporal punishment, physical chastisement and parental discipline. The use of Boolean operators allowed these terms to be searched in relation to their use with children.

3:4:2 Analysis of Print Media Texts

The analytical approach used in this part of the study drew upon ideas from semiotics and schema analysis, a form of global analysis (Casson 1983, Flick 2006). Semiotics is the study of signs and the social production of meaning through sign systems (Denzin 2001, Hall 1997). There are two main elements to this approach: firstly, an approach which grew out of linguistics and the work of Saussure (1960) and Barthes (1972) and secondly, a discursive approach developed from the work of Foucault (1977, 1980). One of the premises in a semiotic approach is that language and meanings are not fixed, but instead shift over time and from place to place. Barthes (1972) suggested that the mass media is a product of our culture and also that it produces and reproduces knowledge in the recording of social events that structure and offer meaning to our daily lives.

The print media texts selected for study were classified by year and by newspaper, noting the number of articles about the use of smacking by parents that were published in each period (See Table Three p. 129). Using the principles of schema analysis (Casson 1983; Ryan and Bernard 2000), the main themes within each article were identified by interrogating the texts with a series of questions derived from literature review (Table Two). This process involved cognitive mapping of concepts found in the texts, recognising associations both in terms of linguistics and ideas, and developing a framework for interrogation.

Table2 Data Abstraction Framework Used to Interrogate the Media Texts

What sort of language and terms are used by journalists to describe and define parents' use of physical punishment with their children?
What kinds of judgements about the use of physical punishment by parents are being made?
What are the underlying assumptions that are made (e.g. about rights and responsibilities)?
Do any assumptions made reflect a specific perspective on children's identities?
Do any assumptions made reflect a specific perspective about the role of parents?
Are any claims made about the role of society or the state in influencing parents?

Each text was read and re-read to gain a sense of the style of reportage and the specific topics they referred to. For example some of the articles were flippant, attempting to gain the attention of the reader through humour, while others simply reported events and others provided additional comment. In managing this data, care was taken to maintain chronology of events.

These texts were compared and contrasted in order to identify any similarities and differences that were apparent between newspapers of the same period and over time, and to discover what and how things were 'talked about' in the 'smacking discourse' as presented in these newspapers. All of the articles were classified according to their subject, date and the newspaper title. In order to place the articles within an historical social context, the reportage was plotted against a 'time line' that recorded actual events such as legislative change (Table Six p.291).

3:5 PART TWO: BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS

The population of interest in this part of the study consisted of two main groups; parents and grandparents, and registered nurses with a specialist practitioner qualification in Health Visiting or the more recent Public Health Nurse (Health Visitor) qualification. All health visitors were employed in the above role within NHS Scotland in community settings. The reason health visitors rather than any other health or social care professional were selected was because health visitors are ideally placed to work in partnership with families on parenting issues, as they offer a universal service to all families rather than a service that acts only in response to 'problems' (Whittaker and Cowley 2003). In contrast, social care professionals such as social workers and voluntary family workers are often asked to intervene in response to family crisis and have a distinct role in working with families where children have been physically abused. Since this study focuses upon the 'normative' use of smacking rather than child abuse, health visitors rather than social workers were considered to be appropriate participants. Furthermore, since my own clinical experience is health visiting, I hoped that my 'etic' perspective would enable me to conduct interviews with health visitor participants empathetically and to interpret their narratives sensitively, while at the same time taking care not to make assumptions that go beyond the data.

2:5:1 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

There are a number of issues to be considered in determining the appropriate sample size for a qualitative study. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that within qualitative research, it is events and experiences that are the objects of purposeful sampling rather than people per se. This is reiterated by

Sandelowski (1995) and Patton (2002), saying that the power of the findings has more to do with the quality of the information gathered rather than the number of participants involved. However, factors such as the choice of research methods and the aims of sampling should be considered when deciding how many participants should be included in the study (Sandelowski 1995).

In view of the seemingly complex nature of issues around smacking children I was keen to achieve diversity amongst participants in order to gain a broad insight of the nature of the phenomenon while at the same time gaining an in depth understanding or what Gheertz (1973, in Guba and Lincoln 1989) termed '*thick description*'.

Patton (2002) suggests that since the selection of participants is not to serve the purpose of randomisation nor generalisability, then the term purposive sampling can be used to describe the process. He describes six different types of purposive sampling:

1. Sampling extreme or deviant cases.
2. Sampling typical cases.
3. Maximum variation sampling.
4. Sampling critical cases.
5. Sampling politically important or sensitive cases
6. Convenience sampling.

Although Patton describes six different types of purposive sample, it is likely there will be some overlap amongst them; for instance, typical cases may be contained within a maximum variation sample. For the purpose of this study,

the sample was selected purposively to achieve inclusion of both typical cases and variation. According to Stake (1995) the criteria for selecting a participant is that something can be learned from them that will help to answer the research question. Participants volunteered to participate in the study on account of their interest in the subject, since it was of immediate relevance to their personal experience. While potential for bias might be considered in a quantitative study, it is this personal experience of the phenomenon in daily life that is crucial to this study (Patton 2002).

The sample was selected both serially and contingently (Patton 2002). By this I mean that succeeding participants were recruited on grounds of their possible difference to the preceding participants. For example, on finding that parents recruited from a parent and toddler group were all married and living with their partner, I decided to recruit amongst single parents to gain what might be a different perspective. In this way the final number of participants was determined as the study progressed, that is, until data saturation was achieved. However, knowing when nothing new is being seen in the data (data saturation), is rather subjective and relative, as it can always be 'only for now' (Morse 1989 in Sandelowski 1995 p.180). The number of participants recruited to the study was also determined pragmatically, in that the amount of data generated in in-depth narrative interviews is potentially large and there are time restraints imposed upon the study (Sandelowski 1995).

The total number of participants interviewed was thirty-four.

Western Isles Health Visitors: Eight (7 of whom were mothers)

Fife Health Visitors: Ten (All were mothers and two were grandmothers)

Mainland Parents: Eleven

Mainland Grandparents: Five

3:5:2 Regional Diversity.

Recruitment of parents and grandparents commenced in Fife and snowballed to include participants from West Lothian and the Scottish Borders. Health visitors were recruited from Fife and the Western Isles of Scotland. The southeastern areas of Scotland were selected for travel convenience and resource reasons. Health Visitors from the Western Isles were recruited because this is a an area of Scotland that boasts preservation (despite global capitalism) of some cultural traditions and practices that are different to those found in the more southerly parts of Scotland. For example, wide use of the Gaelic language, the keeping of the Sabbath and the influence of organised religion (McIntosh 2001). According to the literature review, religious affiliation may influence attitudes towards smacking (Murphy-Cowan and Stringer 2001).

Non-health visitor parents from the Western Isles were not included in the study for pragmatic reasons. Although attempts were made to contact parent and child organisations such as toddler groups, this proved to be difficult to achieve within the time scale and resources available for the study. However, health visitors from the Western Isles that were interviewed did include their stories of childhood and becoming a parent in their narratives, which added a parent perspective to this stage of data collection.

Exclusion of non-health visitor parents and grandparents from the Western Isles as study participants could be considered to be a limitation of this study and an

area for future research. Alternatively, since mainland health visitor and parent and grandparents' narratives shared more similarities than differences, it could be argued tentatively that this might also have been the case on the Western Isles.

3:5:3 Socio-economic Diversity

Socio-economic diversity amongst participants from the Western Isles was not considered to be an issue, since all were currently employed in the same occupation, health visiting. However, socio-economic diversity amongst Fife participants was sought in order to record a range of potentially different experiences of growing up and of being a parent.

Initially parents and grandparents were recruited to the study through contact with a parent and toddler group in an urban area of Fife. The meeting hall was situated on the edge of a local authority housing estate and a privately owned housing estate. Therefore, it seemed likely that parents of pre-nursery aged children from both housing areas would use this facility. The group organiser confirmed this verbally. Having briefly discussed my study with the group organiser, I was invited to the group to meet with parents and any grandparents who were present, to explain what the study was about and to distribute the study information leaflet and consent form. The topic immediately generated a lot of discussion, and I was able to talk about the study with small groups of parents who were sitting around the hall. Parents had mixed views about legislative change and shared their personal childhood anecdotes. Some parents stated that they would be happy to complete a brief questionnaire, but seemed less sure about participating by agreeing to an interview. This may

have been related to their time constraints or because they perceived this to be a potentially less threatening option, and more fun to complete such a questionnaire with a friend.

Parents were asked to pass on a copy of the information leaflet and consent form to any of their children's grandparents living within a ten mile radius of the town, to ensure ease of access. Those recruited to the study through this setting were all professional mothers in two parent families, and also included the grandparents of one child.

In the following phase of recruitment I was keen to seek participation from single parents as it seemed likely that their experience of being a parent may be somewhat different to that of the previous group (Sidebotham 2001, Taylor and Baldwin 2000). The Fife branch of 'Gingerbread', a voluntary organisation that supports single parents, kindly agreed to distribute the study information leaflet and consent form to their clients in the locality who attended group meetings. Potential participants were able to telephone or email me or one of the other contacts named on the information leaflet, if they had any concerns or questions about the study.

There are potential issues when an individual acts as a gatekeeper. They may choose whom to pass on the study information, thereby, potentially excluding participants that may have much to contribute to the study. I was reassured that this study information was distributed amongst all group members. Participants were able to contact me by email or telephone or by return by post in a stamped

addressed envelope provided for further information, to return their consent form and to arrange their interview.

The Fife group leader informed me that the majority of their clients were mothers and that the Gingerbread organisation were making efforts to include single parent fathers in their activities. However, only single mothers agreed to participate in the study, a total of three participants. No grandparents were recruited to the study in this phase. There are a number of possibilities that may explain this, including, breakdown of family relationships and lack of perceived support from a grandparent and living too far away from the inclusion area.

A third phase in the recruitment of parents to the study was achieved by posting information about the study on a South East Scotland home educators' website. Participants contacted me directly by email to receive a consent form and to arrange the time and venue for interview. In addition to the parents that were recruited to the study via this web-site, two further grandparents also agreed to participate. Not all parents recruited to the study in this phase were actually engaged in home educating their children, but had accessed the site to gain information.

Lastly, two grandparents were recruited to the study as a result of me overhearing a conversation they were having about their grandchildren and the advice they gave to their sons and daughters-in-law about managing their behaviour. They were interested in this study and agreed to allow me to post out the study information to them. By this stage in the study I was really beginning to 'feel like an anthropologist', looking and listening, being sensitised to what was going on around me and seizing opportunity to recruit participants

through serendipitous meetings as well as by the planned strategies described above.

3:5:4 Engaging with fathers.

I have used the term parents in the previous section about the recruitment strategy, since this was the intention. However, there was only one male voice in the narratives, a grandfather who agreed to participate in an interview along with his wife. This lack of participation from fathers is not uncommon in studies about family life (Phares 1996, Bayley, Wallace and Choudhry (2009). There are a number of reasons why despite attempts to be inclusive of both parents, only mothers engaged with the study. Firstly this may have something to do with what Daniel and Taylor (2001) have referred to as a self-reinforcing cycle, wherein fathers do not expect to be involved in parenting interventions and similarly health care professional have not expected the participation of fathers. It is possible that this is one of the reasons why fathers are less likely to engage in parenting research. Although the parent and toddler groups that I visited when recruiting participants to the study were so named, there were no fathers present on any occasion.

With these considerations in mind, I made sure that when final arrangements were being made for interviews by telephone, I was careful to include fathers in this invitation. Some fathers seemed happy to discuss the study over the telephone at this point, but declined to participate in any interviews. Instead fathers offered to take care of their children during the interview. A frequent response was 'my wife (or partner) will be able to help you with that'. No fathers in this study were 'at home' fathers. Even where both parents were in full time

employment and could be assumed to share childcare, the task of interview was delegated to the mother. These observations seem to reinforce the view that childcare continues to be gendered. Despite these efforts to recruit fathers to this study, only one grandfather participated and this is acknowledged as a limitation to this study.

Within this study, however, fathers' stories of growing up and being a parent were often presented vicariously by their partners. Despite the limitations of representation, this has added another dimension to the data. It is clear from some of these narratives that the mother's understanding of the father's story had helped them to understand their perspective on being a parent, and had allowed them to be empathetic. For example, Moira, a Fife parent participant, explained that she understood her husband's definition of smacking as an appropriate tool to teach children moral behaviour, since his own experience was of strict punitive discipline in childhood. This had enabled her to think about ways of helping her husband to think about smacking differently, in accordance with her own belief that smacking is a form of bullying, and to be able to change their parenting practice.

Phares (1996) suggests that in order to engage fathers in research or in intervention with parents, their invitation should be explicitly stated. Rather than using the term parents, fathers and mothers should be used instead. This is an important consideration for future research if fathers' own voices are to be heard.

2:5:5 Recruitment of Health Visitors

Following NHS ethical approval and subsequent approval by the appropriate NHS Health Board Research and Development Committees, access to health visitors in the two geographical areas was obtained initially by contacting the Lead Nurse for Primary Care Nursing. Health visitors were recruited firstly from Fife, and following these interviews, health visitors were recruited from the Western Isles. Copies of the study information leaflet (Appendix Three) and consent form (Appendix Five), along with a covering letter were forwarded electronically by email. Following brief telephone calls with the Lead Nurses to discuss details such as time scale of the data gathering period, travel arrangements and access to suitable accommodation for interviews to take place, the lead nurses distributed all of the study information to all health visitors in their geographical area. All health visitors in the two areas had access to email and this facilitated early return of consent forms and ease of arranging specific interview times and venues. Interviews in Fife took place over a period of two months and interviews in the Western Isles took place over one week.

A number of exclusion and inclusion criteria were developed to ensure participants had experience of working with families with children, as follows:

- The participant must be a registered and practicing health visitor.
- The participant must hold a caseload that includes families with children, or must be involved in community development.
- Health visitors were excluded from this study if they were not at present employed in this role, or if they were specialist health visitors working exclusively with older people or in contact tracing for example.

- Additionally, for ethical reasons, health visitors were excluded if the researcher knew them as personal friends.

2:5:6 Issues of Environment

Participants were given choice about where they would like to be interviewed; parents and grandparents were given the option of being interviewed in their own home or in a venue such as a community centre near by. Health visitors were asked if they would like me to talk with them at their work place, or at an alternative venue close by. All health visitors chose to talk with me at their own work places or in the case of the Western Isles, a central health centre that was mutually convenient in terms of travel considerations. Most parents and grandparents were interviewed in their own homes with the exception of those parents who had been recruited to the study via Gingerbread, who chose to be interviewed in their local Gingerbread centre. This centre was familiar to these participants as they met here informally each week. It was important that participants felt comfortable and not vulnerable in the interview surroundings in order to minimise any possible sense of inequity in the relationship between me the researcher, and them as participants. Secondly, the nature of the interviews was about personal aspects of their life stories and an environment that was conducive to narrating such a story was crucial.

Conducting interviews in participants own homes had both pros and cons. On one hand, I was able to observe first hand, ways in which parents managed their children, usually by negotiation, especially when they were competing for their parent's attention and also when the children wanted to engage with me in play. However, the main limitation was that the parent was sometimes

distracted from the story they were relating and also transcription of the digital recording of the interview was sometimes difficult due to children's talk.

3:5:7 Ethical Issues

In accordance with the research governance requirements of the NHS and the University of Dundee, School of Nursing and Midwifery, ethical approval from both University of Dundee Research and Innovation Services (the research governance body within the University) was sought. With regards to the participating health visitors who were NHS employees, NHS ethical approval was sought from MREC (Multicentre Research Ethics Committee) and was subsequently granted (Appendix Six).

All prospective participants were forwarded a copy of the study information leaflet and were encouraged to contact a named NHS colleague or me if they had any questions or concerns about the study. Informed written consent was obtained from all study participants in advance of their interviews. They were be informed of their right to withdraw unconditionally from the study at any time and interviews were conducted at a time and place agreed by the participant. They were advised that their anonymity would be protected by the use of pseudonyms on all written reports and that any of the digitally recorded interview files would be deleted at the end of the study. All written data and recordings were stored in a locked filing cabinet and electronic files were password protected.

Since the issues surrounding smacking behaviour are emotive, every effort was made to conduct interviews sensitively, and plans were made to inform

participants of any supportive services available for them should this be required. Participants were informed that they were able to withdraw unconditionally from the interview at any time. Since I did not present participants with my own definition of what constitutes smacking, it was important to consider any action that should be taken if an abusive or potentially abusive situation came to light. In my health visiting practice I had become experienced in conveying to clients my concerns in a transparent way, pointing out what I thought needed to happen next. Sometimes this involved arranging intervention such as involvement in parenting classes and at other times involvement of the multi-professional child protection team. Having discussed the possibility of an abusive situation coming to light, then it was agreed that I would turn to my health visiting skills and explain to the participant my concerns and make any necessary referrals to the child protection team. The interview would at this point be terminated. In the event, this issue did not arise.

3:6 USING INTERVIEWS TO GENERATE DATA

Within qualitative research methodologies, a number of different methods of interviewing have been used to collect data by researchers, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and narrative interviewing (Reissman 1993, Kvale 1996, Denzin and Lincoln 2005, Barbour 2008).

For this doctoral study I needed an approach to data gathering that would capture not only peoples' own experiences of the use of physical punishment as a child and as a parent or in the professional life of the health visitor, but also

their interpretation of such events in their own life context. Participants may also offer theories about 'why and how' in relation to the wider social context that can be interpreted to reveal places where the social, cultural personal and political meet (Reissman 1993). It was also important to discover a method of interviewing that would allow me to record a sense of any change in attitudes or behaviour over time; within a generation or across different generations of the same family, or within experience as health care practitioners. In the following section reasons for using a narrative approach to interviewing, definitions of narrative, how narrative accounts can be generated and strengths and limitations of this approach are discussed.

3:6:1 Defining Narrative

Definitions of narrative have been discussed by Polkinghorne (1988) Reissman (1993) and Czarniawska (2004). They suggest that some definitions are all inclusive, such as that offered by Barthes (1977). He proclaimed that narrative was present in every society from the beginning of the history of mankind; in the written and unwritten, the spoken and unspoken; it could be found in dance, drama, legend, painting, as well as in conversation.

Narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (Barthes 1977, p79).

Other definitions restrict their use of the term narrative to discrete units, which have a clear beginning and an end, unsituated events that are somehow detached from the surrounding discourse (Reissman 1993). What seems to be a defining feature of narrative is the idea of sequence or chronology (Czarniawska 2004). Labov and Waletzky (1967) pioneers in the field of

narrative research maintained that stories chronologically order events through time. Bruner (1986) refined this definition, stating narrative is composed of a unique series of events that involved human beings as actors. He later (1990) made an interesting observation that has parallels with the way some participants in the current study used narrative:

When you encounter an exception to the ordinary, and ask someone what is happening, the person you ask will virtually always tell a story that contains reasons (Bruner 1990 p49).

Reissman (1993) alluded to Bruner's comment, saying that:

Respondents narrativise particular experiences in their lives, often when there has been a breach from the ideal and real, self and society (Reissman 1993 p3).

A further issue regarding definition is that the use of the term story and the term narrative are often used interchangeably (Polkinghorne 1995). However, Reissman (1993) pointed out, not all interview narratives are in story form; they do not all contain features such as a protagonist, inciting conditions or culminating events.

Denzin's (1989) definition helps to clarify some of the issues surrounding definition of narrative and is the one that best describes my own position on what can be considered to be a narrative:

A story tells a sequence of events that are significant for the narrator and his or her audience. A narrative as a story has a plot, a beginning, a middle and an end. It has an internal logic that makes sense to the narrator. A narrative relates events in a temporal, causal sequence. Every narrative describes a sequence of events that have happened (Denzin 1989 p37).

This definition of narrative helped to provide a rationale for the use of such an approach in this study. In the following chapters that describe the findings from analysis of interviews with participants, the term narrative is used to describe an autobiographical account in its entirety. The term 'small story' is also used in the way described by Georgakopoulou (2006). These are stories that are often presented in an, 'Oh, by the way' kind of way, an after thought, or a sudden recollection of a memory. Within the context of the present study, they often consist of a brief story illustrating a point being made within the telling of the life story but may also offer insights into the 'messier business of living and telling' in a way that is quite different to narrative autobiographical accounts that are instead 'idealised and uncontaminated' (Georgakopoulou 2006 p.7). Within the current study, such small stories were sometimes included in participants' narratives when there had been 'a breach from the ideal and real, self and society' (Reissman 2003 p. 3). Examples of this feature can be found in the narrative exemplars (Janice's story) discussed in Chapter Seven of this doctoral thesis.

3:6:2 Generating Narrative

'The decisive moment...' (Henri Cartier-Bresson 1952)



Figure 1. 'Behind La Gare St. Lazare'. 1932. © Cartier-Bresson/Magnum

Cartier- Bresson (1952) referred to 'the decisive moment' as that moment when the camera shutter closed and the resulting photograph captured the very

essence of the subject at that moment in time. This is so cleverly captured in the photograph Fig.1. The image is not contrived by the photographer, but simply reports a happening. These 'moments' are what it is important to capture in interview. This analogy will become clearer when the episodic interviewing approach to generating narrative is discussed later in this chapter. Capturing these moments is a real challenge for the interviewer who is motivated to conduct a meaningful rich interview in relation to the subject, as the following extract from my reflective journal demonstrates:

Journal extract 1: Interviewing and Accountability

The need to conduct sensitive and meaningful interviews is something that I feel a great sense of responsibility for in terms of accountability to the participant and also in terms of making the best use of my time and my supervisor's time in this PhD study. If the interview isn't effective then analysis will be limited. Everything seems to hinge upon 'doing a good interview'. Once I'm in the interview situation, it is up to me.

For these reasons it became really important to discover the most appropriate type of interview for the purpose. On reading Flick's (2006) account of episodic interviewing my gut reaction was yes! This is it! Subsequent reading confirmed that this was an interviewing style that I wanted to try and that could help me to answer the research questions. How this actually worked in practice I'll reflect upon later.

January 2007.

3:6:3 Rationale for episodic interviewing

Episodic interviewing was developed by Flick (2000) as a response to the methodological problems encountered in both semi-structured interviewing and

in using a purely narrative style. The philosophical basis for episodic interviewing is constructivism because it focuses upon the construction of reality during the presentation of experiences (Flick 2000).

According to Flick (2006) there is an assumption that individuals' experiences are stored in the memory as narrative-episodic and semantic knowledge. Episodic knowledge is based upon actual experiences within a specific context. People are able to tell a story about what has happened to them or what they have observed. Semantic knowledge is based upon assumptions abstracted from those situations and generalisations are made. This seemed to be congruent with the study aims that were to understand not only what parents and health visitors do in relation to smacking but also how their experiences over the life course have influenced current behaviour and attitudes.

Episodic interviewing is designed to collect data about knowledge in both the narrative-episodic domain and the semantic knowledge domain. Generative questions are asked initially in order to gather data about specific episodes or experience by asking the participant to narrate the experience. Semantic knowledge is gathered by asking probing questions that are related to the episodes and to the research questions.

Within the context of the current study, participants were initially reminded of the main focus of the study and after briefly explaining that I would not be asking a series of questions as may be expected in a more formal interview, participants were asked to tell me about themselves, being a child, growing up and becoming a parent. This formed a generative question that successfully

allowed participants to present their narrative chronologically and with reference to the study topic.

3:6:4 Strengths of Episodic Interviewing

Taking the Cartier-Bresson analogy further, Cartier-Bresson used the expression, '*almost the decisive moment*' – to describe what happened when he or others took a few minutes to 'set up' the portrait. Here, photographer interference was kept to a minimum in order that the very essence of the subject was not lost (Cartier-Bresson 1952). Narrative in its pure form, when the participant feels free to narrate without interruption from the interviewer can be likened to the spontaneity of 'the decisive moment'. However, in episodic interviewing the researcher 'prepares' whilst listening to the narrative, a series of probing questions relating to the stories selected by the participant as important, that are likely to throw light upon the phenomenon, in the same kind of way that Cartier-Bresson described as an 'almost decisive moment'.

Episodic interview narratives are context related and therefore likely to make the process of constructing reality accessible. These narratives are based upon the experiential knowledge of the participant and as such provide a rich source of data or version of events. This is in contrast to more abstract question and answer styles of interview such as those found in semi-structured questionnaires (Flick 2006).

Flick suggests narrative interviews work due to what he terms 'threefold narrative zugzwangs'; a term that means to compel to action, such as moves in a chess game.

1 Constraint of closing gestalt: the narrator is able to bring to an end the narrative that they have started.

2 Constraint of condensing: the narrator selectively chooses what they would like to be included in the narrative; what is thought to be interesting or most appropriate to the issue, or what they think the interviewer will understand and be within the time constraints of the interview.

3 Constraint of detailing – the narration provides background details that are necessary to understanding the story.

Flick argues that it is these very constraints that allow the narrator control over the presentation of their story, as happens in ordinary everyday conversation. This can be empowering since participants may feel able to approach difficult or awkward issues since these ‘zugwangs’ are under their control.

Isak Dineson succinctly claimed,

“All sorrows can be borne if we can put them into a story”.

(Dineson quoted in Reissman 1993, p4)

What I, as a newcomer to narrative interviewing approaches, found to be strengths of episodic interviewing are recorded in my second journal entry in the following section.

Journal Extract 2: Reflection Upon Episodic Interviewing

Data collection is complete. I have found that as I gained experience, I felt more comfortable about allowing the narrator to tell their story without interruption from me: I used my interview prompts less often.

This reminds me of times when I was learning to use ‘active listening’ for non-directive counselling as a health visitor. In the early days it was hard to

listen attentively without thinking ahead to what my next question would be. Having an interview schedule, though very flexible and brief, did initially act as a 'security blanket'.

I learned that participants seemed to enjoy recounting their stories and that they felt that the topic was an important one for contemporary society. The use of the generative question at the beginning of each interview successfully allowed the participant free reign. Some participants required a little reassurance that what they were saying was what was required, 'is that OK?' or 'is that what you want?'

Not all participants needed my prompts to recount an episode or event that illustrated the point being made. As a result, not all interviews could be described as 'episodic' in the way that Flick suggests. Some were more akin to a narrative biographical interview that is free of researcher comment. Participants did make use of what Flick termed 'zugwangs'.

However, some participants required more encouragement and the use of open questions such as those that might be used in a semi-structured interview. Narrative interviewing and episodic interviewing are skills that require practice.

July 2008.

3:6:5 Limitations of Episodic Interviewing

There are a number of limitations to episodic interviewing. These are related to both the participant and the interviewer. For example, according to Flick (2006) not all participants are very good at narration and may feel this is an unfamiliar form of conversation. Some participants may be shy or incommunicative. This interview is in some ways a false situation. After all, it is not often that a complete stranger is interested in your thoughts and experiences of every day life.

In relation to the interviewer, there is a problem in allowing the participant to narrate without interruption. The interviewer may not be able to withstand the urge to interrupt with questions, and may as a consequence not hear the full 'story' that the narrator wishes to recount (see my comments about my own experience of this issue in the previous journal entry). Additionally, this method of interviewing does not suit all situations or issues, as it doesn't allow the interviewer to observe activities or interactions. Instead, insights from the participants' narratives and viewpoints can be used to reconstruct or interpret experience (Flick 2006).

This method of interviewing is likely to generate copious amounts of data for transcription, though it is likely to have a greater proportion relevant to the research question than if a purely narrative style is used since probing questions are used to expand upon or to clarify issues that seem to be pertinent to the study.

3:6:6 Data Management and Analysis of Interviews

The large amount of data that was gathered during the digitally recorded interviews was transcribed verbatim, and was managed electronically using media and word processing files.

The literature review revealed there are a number of different approaches to analysing narrative (Reissman 1993; Mishler 1995 and Czarnowska 2004). However, there is little guidance on the processes involved in their use. Polkinghorne (1995) offers a more structured approach to analysis. He suggests that there are two ways to approach the data, *paradigmatic analysis of*

narratives and *narrative analysis*. These are developments of Bruner's (1987) 'modes of cognitive functioning' that offer two distinct ways of ordering experience and of constructing reality. What Bruner refers to as the 'paradigmatic mode', is about the search for universal truths and is characterising by logical reasoning. This is applied across all of the narrative data. Alternatively, the 'narrative mode' looks for particular connections between events within a single narrative account. This theme is taken up in the following definition:

Narrative is a scheme by which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units (Polkinghorne 1988. p.11).

Although Polkinghorne does not provide an inflexible 'recipe' for analysing narrative data, he provides guidance on the principles of story construction and emplotment, and allows researchers to clarify and plan their own strategies (Emden 1998).

The aims of paradigmatic analysis of narratives according to Polkinghorne (1988) are to uncover common themes or plots across all of the data. Similarly Sarbin (1986) describes the nature of emplotment, the construction of the story that not only describes events but that may also offer reasons for, or causes of action:

Narrative is a way of organising episodes, actions and accounts of actions, it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated. The narrative allows for the

inclusion of actors 'reasons for their acts as well as the causes of what's happening (Sarbin 1986, p.52).

Flicks description of narrative knowledge and semantic knowledge is consistent with both Polkinghorne and Sarbin's perspective on the nature of narrative.

Events that are presented in stories happen within a time frame. This can be within the timescale of a person's life, historically in the more distant past, or over a short space of time such as a trip to the supermarket. People recount their stories within the context of their own life experience and use experience to make sense of, or to interpret what events have meant to them. This theme is reiterated by Emden (1998) who concluded that:

Ultimately the function of narrative analysis is to consider the potential of stories to give meaning to people's lives and the treatment of data as stories (Emden 1998, p.32).

Although Flick (2006) recommended that episodic interview data should be analysed by thematic content analysis, it was not until I was actually gathering narratives and transcribing them, I realised that if I used this method alone, much could be lost by stripping away the contextual richness of individual narratives. I was keen not to lose a sense of the whole story or the personality of the participants, and to maintain the temporality of each story while at the same time identifying emergent themes amongst the narratives. Therefore, a two stage sequential approach was used that involved application of both of Polkinghorne's (1988) ways of analysing the data.

An understanding of the phenomena was sought through exploring both the content and the form of the narratives in a sequential approach to narrative analysis in ways that have been described by other authors. For example, Simons et al (2008), in their study about the effectiveness of community mental health nurses in treating people with common mental health problems in primary care, used a two stage approach to analysing narrative that included comparing the data across all narrative texts as well as analysing content within a single narrative. Similarly, McIlpatrick et al (2007) also used a two-stage approach to analysis of narrative data in a phenomenological study about the experiences of patients having chemotherapy in a day hospital setting.

Emden (1998) highlighted that although much is written in scholarly texts about analysing narrative there is very little explicit guidance on how exactly this can be achieved. This situation has been remedied by the above authors who have provided an in depth account of their analysis of narrative. Drawing upon the work of Bruner (1980) and Polkinghorne (1988 and 1995) and Reissman (1993), Simons et al (2008), Ayres et al (2003) and McIlpatrick et al (2007) have explored how through the use of a two stage approach to analysis, some of the problems in using a purely content analysis approach can be ameliorated and can enrich the presentation of the findings and bring a greater sense of coherence to their interpretation.

There are both strengths and limitations of such approaches to analysing narrative. For example, Ayres et al (2003) raised concerns that data management strategies relying upon coding and categorising texts into themed units can strip away much of the contextual richness of individual experiences.

Although coding is effective in capturing commonalities or patterns of experience, it is less useful in capturing individual uniqueness. Coding techniques can decontextualise the experience or event. This fragmentation can make it difficult to identify associated meanings. On the other hand, while analysis within cases allow particular aspects of experience to be understood as a confluence of meaning that makes sense in relation to the whole story, comparisons are difficult when case studies are analysed in their entirety. Ayres et al concluded that by using both approaches, across case and within case analysis synergistically and interactively, they were enabled to capture the essence or variation of experience amongst individuals as well as recognizing the necessity for understanding the individual narrative in its own context.

Within the current study, the use of both across case and within case approaches to analysis, allow data to be considered comprehensively and may help to explain more fully how the finding have been interpreted. The two approaches allow crystallization of the findings. This may contribute to assessment of the rigour or 'goodness' of the study (Emden and Sandelowski 1998 p.206). Further discussion about criteria for assessing the quality of narrative approaches can be found in the following section on p.116.

Analysis and interpretation actually began while at the stage of listening to participants and thinking about their stories during interviews, and was continued during transcription of recordings. The following is an account of the process of analysis and interpretation. I have linked these two processes together because they happen almost simultaneously; it is hard to be clear

about when analysis stops and interpretation begins as the two processes are in some way enmeshed (Wolcott 1990).

3:6:7 Paradigmatic Analysis Across Narratives

Once transcribed, all of the narratives were read and re-read to gain a sense of the experience of the phenomenon amongst all participants. Ayres et al (2003) describe this stage as becoming *immersed* in the data. The purpose of narrative analysis across all texts (paradigmatic analysis) was to compare the experiences of all the participants and to identify both commonalities and variation in not only the themes that emerged but also in the way that these narratives were produced; the language used.

Paradigmatic analysis across the narratives was conducted by initially returning to each participants narrative and identifying stanza's within them, rather like putting phrasing into passages of music. This allowed the narratives to be organised into manageable sections. Reissman (1993) describes the stanza as it is used within poetry, as a series of lines on a particular topic that belong together and are said at the same rate and with little hesitation. It is at the end of a stanza in everyday conversation that a response from the listener is required, before going on to talk about something else. The purpose of paradigmatic analysis of narrative was to explore both the content and the structure of the stories.

One of the challenges in using a narrative approach is that there is not a prescribed method. Subsequently, a number of different terms are used to describe some of the processes of analysis. For example, rather than referring

to identification of codes and categories within the data, Stanley (2008) uses the term *narrative thread*. This is an appealing term since it is more akin to the way that we talk in every day conversations. There is a common understanding for instance of what it is to 'lose the thread'. There is also a sense in which these threads are woven in the telling of the whole, a feature that is particularly important to narrative research methods. For these reasons, the term *narrative thread* is used in this study to refer to categories identified through paradigmatic analysis.

Within each stanza significant statements, phrases or paragraphs were identified. The identification of stanzas helped to retain the statements in their original context. Narrative threads were derived from these statements and paragraphs and additionally from the themes that emerged from part one of this study (representation of smacking in the print media). Development of these threads was also influenced by my understanding of the literature and additional background reading and my own experience (Ryan and Bernard 2000). Narrative threads were grouped into broader themes by a process of intuiting (Swanon et al 1988 and Ayres et al 2003). This involved critical reflection across the narratives taking account of related theory according to the literature, in a constant comparative manner. Once themes were identified they were described in a brief summary. When put together these themes form the essential structure of the phenomenon (Ayres et al 2003).

Like Ayres et al (2003), McIlfactrick (2007) and Simons et al (2008), I too was concerned that analysis across the narratives did not portray the uniqueness or

the intensity of individual participants' own experience. Analysis within narratives rather than across narratives was required in order to achieve this.

3:6:8 Analysis Within Narratives

Exemplars were selected from each participant group, parents, grandparents and health visitors. Since there were thirty-four narrative interviews in total, it was impractical to analyse each one as a discrete whole in sufficient depth in a way that allowed the data to be explored within the context of a life. Decisions, therefore, had to be made about which narratives would provide the best exemplars. As this term suggests, narratives were selected that most effectively portrayed a particular theme or themes that had emerged from the *across narrative analysis*. The question, what does this theme mean for this participant, in the context of the narrative in its entirety, was applied.

A key aspect of this approach to analysis is the iterative and sequential nature of the method. The first part of the study informed the second part, and within the second part of the study, the first phase of analysis (paradigmatic, across narrative analysis) in turn informed the second and final phase, within case exemplar analysis. Simon et al (2008 p 129) describe this as "shifting the focus", or in other words, viewing the same object from the same standpoint ideologically, but adjusting the lens to bring into view particular aspects of the phenomenon, one after another.

The sequential use of *across narrative* and *within narrative* analysis has revealed the complex nature of the phenomenon and has allowed greater in depth understanding than might have been achieved with one method alone.

For example, connections that were made between past experience and present day construction of meaning in participants' narrative accounts of their experience of transition, may not have been apparent by paradigmatic analysis alone.

In the following section, issues about measuring the quality of qualitative research is firstly discussed in a general sense, then with specific reference to using narrative. Debate about the trustworthiness of biographical narrative data and narrative such as that found within print media texts and the way that interpretation of these narratives is re-presented in this thesis is pertinent to measuring the quality of this study.

3:7 MEASURING GOODNESS IN NARRATIVE RESEARCH

It has long been recognised that concepts of rigour such as validity and reliability are problematic within qualitative research. Rigour is defined as the 'goodness' of qualitative research (Emden and Sandelowski 1998). Concepts of reliability and validity have been transferred from the positivist paradigm and have been either rejected completely by some authors (Yonge and Stewin 1988) or modified by others; the most influential within nursing spheres being Guba and Lincoln's work (Emden and Sandelowski 1998; de Witt and Ploeg 2006). Lincoln and Guba's criteria, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were later acknowledged by Lincoln to have been translated from positivist notions of internal and external validity. Emden and Sandelowski suggest this translation may simply be a change in words rather than any

change in ideas and practice. Lincoln (1995) later recognised that the influences of positivism are persistent despite attempts to develop new criteria. Yonge and Stewin (1988) assert that concepts of validity and reliability are 'misnomers' (p63) for qualitative research because qualitative methods are so diverse and have different goals, underpinned by radically different epistemological positions.

In the more recent work, Lincoln (1995) focused upon 'positionality', an understanding that is mirrored by Gheertz' stance on the creation of texts, that they are locally produced and any notion of truth can be only in part. This is a position that is relevant to narrative biographical methodologies as discussed further in the following section (p.123). Lincoln also asserts that criteria for quality intersect with ethical standards for research in relation to the researcher and the researched. Similarly Reissman (2008) argues:

Students will have to make arguments for the trustworthiness of their work from within their situated perspectives that in turn inform the ethical parameters of the inquiry (Reissman 2008, p 184).

Attempts have been made to offer generic criterion for measuring goodness in qualitative research, however the limitations of using a generic checklist have been criticised with the suggestion that what is required is approach specific criteria.

Barbour (2008) offers a useful generic checklist in the form of a series of questions, with the proviso that only some of them may be relevant to the research paper. This is a position similar to that suggested at an earlier date by

Smith (in Guba 1990), who suggested criteria for goodness may be conceived of as an open ended list, constantly modified through practice by the requirements of emergent qualitative methodologies. The author and reader are left with the challenge of justifying inclusion or exclusion of particular questions according to methodological or philosophical position. For example, in relation to reassurance that the data has not been selectively analysed, the following question is posed by Barbour: (p34),

“Has some form of counting been employed in order to identify patterns?”

(Barbour 2008, p.34).

This question may be useful when assessing quality of a paradigmatic analysis or constant comparative method, across a number of cases, but is less relevant to within case narrative analysis where connections made between episodic and semantic knowledge are crucial to interpretation of a single narrative in its entirety.

3:7:1 Issues of Representation

Concerns about representation in narrative research are fundamentally about reflexivity (Arvay 2003). Furthermore, ideas about representation are at the heart of discussion about trustworthiness and rigour within narrative research. Within the context of a narrative approach the story is told twice: the story telling that takes place by the participant with the researcher, and the story that is told by the researcher in the final report or thesis. This transformation process involves a number of re-presentations of the story. Along the route of re-presentation there are a number of places in which the researcher can

reflexively pause for a moment to consider the implications of the dialogic of self and participant in the recounting, transcribing and interpreting of the story.

Reissman (1993) suggests that since researchers do not have direct access to their participants' experiences, representational decisions are made at all stages of the research process and that it is important for the researcher to confront this. I found that the use of Reissman's framework helped to explain why and how stories were recounted in a particular way. Although five levels are described, Reissman points out that the boundaries between them are 'porous' (p8).

The starting place (or what Reissman terms the Primary Experience) is the actual episode that was experienced at some time by the participant.

Level 1. Attending.

The episode or experience happens within a specific context and is made sense of in relation to one's personal situation. For example, if smacking happened as a one off experience it is likely to be interpreted differently to the repeated or intense use of this form of punishment. Additionally, when participants were given a brief summary of what my study was about and where my interests lay, it is likely they would give some thought to what they might want to re-count to me in the interview. Furthermore, participants were likely to reconstruct their own experiences of smacking in the light of recent experiences, and wider social influences such as media opinion and the law. This is evident in the narratives told by participants in this study. For instance, participants might say 'when I was thinking about you coming along today, I

started to think about it [smacking] all over again: I haven't thought about this for years'. This is in a sense a 'preparing to tell' level, and is an example of the porous nature of this framework.

Level 2 Telling

The experience may have been recounted a number of times during a life course and may have changed over time as the experience is interpreted and reinterpreted differently in the light of the changing context over time and also depending upon the nature of the audience. The narrator tells the story according to what they want the listener to understand of them; it is a representation of self (Goffman 1959). It is this power of agency (of the narrator) that makes this approach to interviewing, rather than a more structured question and answer style, potentially empowering for the participant (Flick 2000).

Flick (2006) also suggests that the narrative that is told is modified by the storyteller in a way that accommodates the generative question that is posed by the researcher at the beginning of the interview. This is seen to be strength in the interview situation according to Flick, as this can help the narrative to be focused and to be relevant to the research questions. I found this to be the case as all of the stories that were recounted to me at interview were relevant to the aims of the study.

Similarly, on listening to the story for the first time, in an interview situation for example, the researcher interprets the episode in the light of their own personal experiential knowledge and prior reading. In this way the episode is interpreted

at a cognitive level in accordance with the researcher's own terms of reference. For example, on listening to a participant's story, while trying to be focused and attentive, I found myself comparing my own experience of childhood, being a mother and working with families, with the experience of the participant. I was mentally noting similarities and differences and particular pieces of related literature I had read prior to the interview flitted into my mind. From a social interactionist perspective, this is how we make sense of what is going on in the world. What is happening here in listening to the narrative, mirrors what happens in 'normal everyday' conversation.

Level 3 Transcribing

Transcribing, according to Reissman (1993), is also partial and selective as the transcriber (in the case of this study, the researcher) makes choices about what to include and how to represent what is said and how it has been said. Transcribing transforms what is said into text and involves another level of representation. Mishler (1986) suggests that there is an analogy with the art of photography. Just as the photograph is subject to technical processes in the dark room and in printing, so it is with transcribing. Decisions are made about how to represent the recorded interview as text according to the transcriber's values about what is important. In this study, initially the whole conversation (interview) was captured on a digital recorder. This enabled me on listening again to the recording to recall how things were said, the tone of voice and where there was emphasis for example. I chose to transcribe the data verbatim, both the participant's narrative and also what I said, by way of question or comment. This was helpful to me as a novice in the field of using a narrative approach, as I was able to see at a glance the ratio between participant

narrative and my own contribution. This enabled me to gauge how successful I had been in encouraging the participant to narrate rather than simply to answer questions, to assess how comfortable the participant was with this approach to interviewing and to evaluate how the use of episodic interviewing helped to answer the research questions.

I chose not to note silences, overlapping speech, or the signs of my participation as a listener, (such as aha, hum, ok) for pragmatic reasons related to the time consuming task of personally transcribing the data. This was a trade off for the benefit of hearing the narratives again and again and analysing and interpreting at a primary level as the recordings were transcribed.

Level 4 Analysing.

This for me has been a most challenging issue: how to re –present the data collected, in a form that portrays a sense of the whole, maintaining a sense of chronology of this fragment of a life that is fragmented further by the choices made about analysis and what to include in the final report, the thesis. Reissman suggests the participants' narratives are synthesised into a new narrative by the researcher, according to what is held to be significant by the researcher and is interpreted in the context of their own values and theoretical insights:

Written texts are created within and against particular traditions and audiences, and these contexts can be brought to bear by readers”
(Reissman 1993 p14).

Gheertz (1988) also points to this in his analysis of the representation of ‘what happened’ by authors of anthropological texts.

Level 5 Reading:

All we have is talk and texts that represent reality, partially, selectively and imperfectly (Gheertz 1988 p15).

As Gheertz so succinctly put it, in the same way that the listener does not hear a complete story, as the narrator selects what is to be told, inevitably there is much that is lost to you the reader: the additional dimension provided by the asides and detailed biography apparent in the personal narratives that offer some insight into the personality of the participant and the sense of relationship that is built between the researcher and the participant as they jointly construct the story. All that you have is the representation, the construction of the researcher. These interpretations of the data are only meaningful within a particular place in time, and within the perspective of a particular ideology or interpretive framework (Clifford 1988, Gheertz 1988, Reissman 1993).

Quotations selected from participant narratives in the findings section and sample transcription included in Appendix Seven, may help to redress some of this imbalance and contribute to assessment of truthfulness. Issues of trustworthiness of biographical narrative intersect with ideas about memory. This is discussed in the following section.

3:7:2 Validity and Credibility

For the purpose of this study, specific criteria that are relevant to using a narrative approach have been identified. Guidance has been sought from Reissman, who invites students to consider 'four facets of validity' (2008 p185). The way in which these facets of validity have been attended to is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Historical Truth and Correspondence.

Within the current study, verifiable truths such as changes within the law and social policy sit alongside memories of events that are presented in participants' biographical accounts. Biographical accounts that rely upon memory have received criticism and are discussed by Linde (2000) and Watson (2006 and 2008). However, from a social constructionist perspective verification of 'the truth' within these personal narratives is not important. More crucial is understanding their meanings for individuals and society (Reissman 2008).

Within the reporting of these study findings I have attempted to explain clearly how interpretation of the narrative accounts has been developed. This is supported by provision of identifiable quotations from transcribed data, which allow the reader also to engage with the data. Additionally where there seem to be what Watson (2006 and 2008) refers to as inconsistencies and aporias in participants' narrative accounts, these messy aspects of real life accounts are acknowledged and discussed rather than ignored.

Coherence, Persuasion and Presentation.

This facet of trustworthiness is linked to the previous one, in that the presentation of a coherent interpretive account is dependent upon the transparency of the data that has been selected to illustrate the findings. A

number of different aspects related to presentation may increase confidence in the study findings. For example, inclusion of quotations that are presented verbatim allow the reader and researcher to examine language usage and this brings with it a greater sense of authenticity (Andrews 2008). Furthermore, the inclusion of accounts from journal entries foster ongoing reflexivity that can help to explain how critical decisions were made as the study progressed.

Within the current study, findings from analysis of media representations of smacking and participants narratives that were analysed in two different ways, paradigmatically across case and within case, complement each other and help to strengthen cohesiveness and credibility of any interpretive assertions that have been made.

The final two facets identified by Reissman (2003): pragmatic use and political and ethical use, can only be considered post hoc. Nonetheless, they are important considerations for ongoing debate about goodness in qualitative research. Pragmatic use of the research study relates to how it is used in practice: for example, the clinical practice of nurses or health visitors. One way that I have tried to address this issue is to submit papers for publication in peer-reviewed journals as this study has progressed. These have been attached as appendices to this thesis.

In relation to the political and ethical use of qualitative research, Reissman suggests that contribution to social change and social justice should be considered. While these are themes can be found within the current study: claims that the study contributes to social change and social justice cannot be

made. With regard to ethics and the use of biographical narrative, the approach to interviewing that has been taken, does in some way contribute to empowerment of participants (see previous comments p.120 and Flick 2006).

Although I have presented a rather eclectic methodology, the aim of this chapter, which was to provide a sound, firm theoretical foundation for the study has been achieved.

Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathering and evanescent, one colour melting into another, like the colour on a butterfly's wing; but beneath, the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron (Woolf. 1955 p.255).

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERPRETIVE STAGE OF THE STUDY

The interpretive stage of the study, comprising chapters four to seven, focuses upon the study findings. They are presented in accordance with the different but complementary ways of analysing and interpreting narrative (print media texts and transcribed narrative interviews). In the following four chapters, interpretation of the findings from part one of this study (analysis of print media texts) and from part two of this study (analysis of narrative interviews) are discussed and connections between the two parts of the study are explored.

PART ONE:

Chapter Four: Textual analysis of print media texts

PART TWO:

Paradigmatic analysis across interview narratives:

Chapter Five: The analysis of the structure of narrative interviews, that is, the language used by participants to define smacking and the structure of the interviews in terms of the participants relationship with the researcher.

Chapter Six: Analysis and interpretation of the content from across all narrative interview data.

Within narrative analysis

Chapter Seven: Narrative analysis of six selected case exemplars

PART ONE

CHAPTER FOUR

REPRESENTATION OF SMACKING IN THE PRINT MEDIA

4:1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings from part one of this study (analysis of print media texts) are presented and discussed.

The media have a huge influence on the way the world around us is defined and also on our definitions of ourselves (Gripsud 2002, Silverstone 1994). The media represent the world in both textual and visual images and suggest to their readers ways to make sense of the world. They present ideas about what is and what is not acceptable, what is important and what is not. Therefore it is likely that the media can influence the social construction of our identity as parents, or the parent we should like to be. The media may also offer to their consumers, ideas about the social position of children and the appropriateness of the use of physical discipline with them.

The aim of this part of the study was to discover how issues around the use of physical discipline by parents are represented in the print media, and in keeping with a social constructionist perspective, to shed light upon the way in which parental use of smacking is embedded within societal norms and values. The print media can be seen as part of the cultural context that may potentially influence beliefs and attitudes about the use of smacking and as such is part of the cultural context of participants within this study.

4:2 PRINT MEDIA REPORTAGE ON SMACKING

The print media texts selected for study were firstly classified by year and by newspaper, noting the number of articles about the use of smacking by parents that were published in each period (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of articles found in the selected newspapers.

	1989	1994	1999	2004
The Herald	0	15	33	12
The Daily Record	0	18	39	5
The Daily Telegraph	0	0	0	39
The Independent	5	23	23	29
The Sun	0	0	0	30
Total	5	95	95	115

Interestingly, only *The Independent* published articles about smacking in 1989. Both *The Sun* and *The Daily Telegraph* did not do so until 2004 (Table 3). This raises the question, 'What makes a story newsworthy and what influences editorial decision making?' There are a number of possible reasons for the increase in newspaper coverage over the twenty year period studied. In order to place the articles within a firm social context, the reportage was plotted against a 'history line' that recorded actual events such as legislative change (see Table Six, p.291). This helps to contextualise and to explain the pattern of newspaper reportage about parental use of smacking. For example, the increase in reportage about individual cases of parents or grandparents brought to the justice system, corresponds with public debate about changes to the law to

outlaw parental use of smacking as illustrated in Table Four: nine different cases were reported in fifty media reports.

The broad topic areas that were reported within the smacking discourse and the frequency of their reportage are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Reportage on various themes presented in five UK newspapers in four different years.

Topics	2004	1999	1994	1989
Proposals for legislative change to ban the use of physical punishment by parents.	28	0	0	0
Support for a complete ban on smacking.	13	3	0	0
Support for a partial ban on smacking.	7	0	0	0
Against any legislative change	26	1	0	0
A ban on physical punishment in Independent schools	0	6	2	0
Beliefs about the role of the state in family life.	24	1	0	0
Relationship between youth crime and parental discipline.	19	1	1	1
Physical punishment by childminders and teachers.	13	0	8	0
Effectiveness of physical punishment.	0	16	12	1
Parenting advice.	15	21	0	0
Individual cases of parents or grandparents brought to the justice system	5 (3)	50 (9)	9(6)	0

Figures in parentheses indicate number different cases.

According to these data it seems there was little public debate about the use of smacking twenty years ago. According to the literature review conducted for the current study, Seale (2002) and Kitzinger (2000) offer reasons why the media

use particular 'templates' that shape and have been shaped by societal discourse. For example, in the past, stories about parents who abused their own children were unlikely to be found newsworthy because such a notion was deemed inconceivable.

In a similar way, media coverage about the use of physical discipline by parents was unlikely to hit the headlines in the earlier years of the selected newspapers, because there was a high level of social acceptance that parents should or could use smacking to discipline their children. This taken for granted social fact might not have been viewed as newsworthy.

However, pressure groups such as, End the Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH) were very active towards the end of the 1980s and a number of individuals and groups, such as the Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance, have continued to draw attention to the smacking debate and the need for legislative change to ban the use of smacking. What seems to have acted as an influential catalyst for media debate about parental use of smacking was the publication of the book in 1989 by Peter Newell, 'Children Are people Too; the Case Against Physical Punishment of Children' and a lengthy article published in *The Independent* in July of the same year by the author.

In a similar way to that found in the previous literature review, with earlier work focusing on the effects of smacking and more recent work focusing on children's rights; newspaper articles printed in 1989 featured discussion about the effectiveness of smacking, while in later years the predominant themes were about the relative merits of the introduction of anti smacking legislation.

This reportage was followed by a flurry of specific case examples of parents and grandparents who had been reported to the authorities for their use of smacking. These cases occurred prior to the recent legislative changes and allowed the media powerfully to pose the question to their readership, 'Could this be you?' Here were 'normal' caring parents facing a court sentence for doing what had in the past been considered legitimate and hence becoming newsworthy. The media were not reporting the rare and unusual, but a twist in the tale, because smacking children had been usual amongst parents in the UK. This represents a change in the media definition of what it is to be a 'good parent', and may suggest to readers that to smack is unacceptable. Although the use of brief headlines, such as the example 'Smack dad wins fight to block kids order' from the *Daily Record* (Nutt.1999. July 3rd. p10), are used by newspapers to meet word count targets, the use of labels such as 'Smack Dad', or 'Smack Father' in the headlines about specific cases may serve to emphasise this new definition. Labels such as these seem to convey to audiences, a changing discourse about what constitutes a 'good parent'. This is potentially a dilemma for parents, as acceptance of this new definition of what it is to be a good parent, a non smacking parent, may involve not only change in parenting practices intergenerationally and intragenerationally, but also reconstruction of self-identity. This aspect of print media findings foreshadows important stories of transition amongst study participants in the current doctoral study and is returned to again in chapter seven when participants' stories of chaos, quest and restitution are presented.

4:3 DEFINITIONS OF SMACKING IN THE PRINT MEDIA

The predominant word used in the print media to describe the action of hitting children to discipline them is 'smacking'. Where 'slapping' was used, it generally referred to hitting women by men. The term 'spanking' was rarely used, except with a sexual connotation, and referred to actions by adults with adults. That these euphemisms are used rather than the term 'hitting' may contribute to the shared understanding, consensus definition and interpretation of 'smacking' as trivial.

If smacking is not part of the definition of violence, then it is likely to be considered a legitimate part of parenting. However, if smacking is included in the definition of violence, then it is likely to be considered an inappropriate way to treat children. The following quotation from Bill Walker MP writing in the *Daily Record* illustrates this paradox:

I'm a parent of three and a parent must have the right to spank... Smacking is alright as long as the punishment fits the crime. But, I'm totally against violence against children (Walker 1994 December 15th p.26).

Since smacking is defined in different ways in the print media, I realised that when interviewing study participants I should allow them to define smacking for themselves, rather than to predefine it using a personal definition of smacking or that of Baumrind (1997). My own definition of smacking had been influenced by my own experience as a parent, and my education and practice as a health visitor; in other words, I may have been at a different place in the road to some study participants and I did not want to assume that our understandings were in agreement. Allowing participants to offer their own definitions of smacking

would enable me to ascertain how their definitions of smacking converged or diverged with definitions found within the print media.

Definitions found within the print media are limited in that they appear as sound bites. In contrast, participants' definitions of smacking are likely to be more deeply contextualised within a life story. The way that smacking is defined is a theme that reoccurred in analysis of participants' biographical narratives in this doctoral study and is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

4:4 THEMES FOUND WITHIN PRINT MEDIA SMACKING DISCOURSE

Within the smacking discourse represented in the selected newspapers, there were four dominant themes encompassing the main thrust of the smacking discourse as portrayed in the print media:

- The rights of the child
- The effectiveness of smacking
- Long- term effects and consequences
- The role of the state

Although these themes are presented as discreet threads, there are places where they intersect. Examples of quotations from the print media are used to illustrate the way in which each theme was represented in the text.

4:4:1 The Rights of the Child: Children are People

When writers or commentators presented a perspective that was not in favour of the use of smacking, often supporting legislative change to ban smacking either totally or a compromise, then their rationale was that children should have the same rights and protection as adults. The following example from *The Independent*, a UK liberal paper, illustrates this:

It [anti-smacking legislation] goes one step along the way to agreeing that children like adults have the right not to be hit. If we are afraid of ambiguity, then let there be none; let us simply outlaw all violence against kids.

(Aaronovitch. 1999. May 21st. p3).

Similarly, the following quotation from a letter published in the *Daily Record*, a Scottish tabloid, raises issues about how smacking is defined and suggests that children should be afforded the same protection as women:

When men are accused of physical assault to their wives, it is referred to as a beating; when they are accused of assaulting their children it is called smacking. What's the difference? (Reilly. 1999. May 31st. p29).

Five years earlier a similar point was made emphatically in a letter to the *Daily Record* and is illustrated in the following quotation:

You Said It: Some people take the view that violence against children in the form of smacking is perfectly acceptable. But I think that there would be an outcry if one word was changed to read: the only way to deal with a stubborn WIFE is a short sharp smack – it isn't cruelty, it's common sense

(MacFadyen1994, March 23rd).

Within the previous quotations that have been used to capture the theme 'Children's Rights', children are seen as people with the same human rights as everyone else. Within such a discourse, legitimate violence towards children is rendered illegitimate and should therefore cease. The previous two quotations place children's rights firmly within human rights discourse as reading between the lines, they hark back to times when ideas of ownership of women by their husbands or fathers was normative. As such, children's rights discourse within the U.K. is part of a wider global discourse that is about the emergent ecology of humankind.

In the following quotation from *The Herald*, a rare insight into children's perspectives on the use of physical punishment is presented and a call for children to be enabled to contribute to any further debate on the issue:

Most children regard smacking as hitting and have negative feelings about their parents after being physically disciplined according to a new report. Many children do not see much difference between parents smacking children and other forms of hitting...

Children did not hit back when they were smacked because their parents could hit harder. Alan Miller of the Scottish Human Rights Centre said the children's views will have to be taken into account in the debate about what is the proper level and form of discipline (Keith Sinclair 1999, January 11th The Herald p.5).

Although children's status as people with human rights is represented in the print media, there is controversy about how children might participate in decisions about how discipline should be used with them. The following colourful letter was published in *The Independent* at a time when debate about a legislative ban on smacking was at a peak and when comment was at its fiercest:

Childish Logic: Sir, Baroness Findlay writes that a recent show of hands of school children suggests that they overwhelmingly prefer reasoning over smacking. Has she asked turkeys what they think of Christmas?

(Edward Collier 2004 November 9th p.34).

However, not all contributors were of the same opinion and instead have raised concerns about how children's rights to be free from assault (smacking) can be enacted. The stance taken in the following quotation seems to position children as different to adults as it states the absurdity of any notion that children should be afforded protection from smacking by the law:

Sir I'm growing weary of some of the arguments being used in the smacking debate. Attempting to justify an outright ban on smacking on the grounds that children should be given the same legal protection as adults seems completely absurd. I simply fail to see how any logical consistency could be maintained if legislation banning smacking were to be passed

(Fraser 2004 November 11th The Independent p. 40).

Conclusions can be drawn from findings within the theme, 'The Rights of the Child'. Where children's rights were discussed, this was in support of government proposals to amend the law relating to parental use of physical discipline. Accordingly, there were considerably more newspaper articles that reported on this topic in 2004 and to a lesser degree in 1999 (see Table Three). Published letters from the public that were in support of legislative change, positioned children as people, who should be accorded the same rights to protection from assault as adults. However, not all of the contributions to the newspapers echoed the same position, with some, even in the most recent editions of the newspapers, emphasising that children are different to adults and that the law should attend to them in a different way to adults. Therefore, the idea of children as a marginalised group (Qvortrup 1994) represents continuity over time within media narratives.

The often diverse opinions about children's rights and the significance of this for the smacking debate within the print media have resonance with arguments presented in the literature review. For example, those contributors to the newspapers who emphasised children as different to adults, have as their main concern, the 'becoming child' rather than the 'being child', with the opinions of the incomplete child deemed invalid. While those contributors that positioned children as equally in need of protection from assault as adults, also recognised

the value of children's views about the use of smacking as a punitive measure. This perspective is in accordance with the pragmatic approach to thinking about children's rights (NCB 1992) and more recently NSPPC (2010). This theme has great significance for understandings of recognition and reciprocity both for a more global perspective on relations between adults and children and for families (O'Neill 1994, Mayall 2001). It helps to move discussion on from viewing agency as a unidirectional entity to something more akin to mutuality. Further discussion of recognition and reciprocity is found in the following chapters in relation to individuals' experience of transition.

4:4:2 The Effectiveness of Smacking: a Short Sharp Smack

The second theme identified in the print media texts was argument about the effectiveness of smacking as a means to discipline unruly children. In contrast to articles that supported a ban on smacking, when articles were written in favour of the use of smacking by parents, the underpinning rationale was smacking works and it does not do children any harm. This is a feature of articles written in the earlier years of the period selected. It is an example of the way in which the discourse has developed from one that focuses largely on issues about the effectiveness of physical punishment to advocating the human rights of the child. The following example, again from *The Independent*, illustrates this second theme:

It's absolute piffle to say that smacking children teaches them that using violence is OK. There are two kinds of violence, good and bad... Smacking is away of educating the aggressive instincts of children. Children need the security of knowing they have a mother who is bigger and stronger than they are, and who is in control (Rodwell 1989 October 4th p.27).

A contributor to the *Daily Record* some years later reiterated the same point,

All this talk about banning smacking children is nonsense. Kids who behave badly need to be taught a lesson, and a short sharp smack never did anyone any harm (Cox 2004 July 14th p34).

The following news item was published in *The Independent* ten years later in response to the news of a proposed lecture tour in the U.K. by two American fundamentalist Christian evangelists, that was organised by 'Christian Education Europe'. They were reported to advocate bible based strict childrearing methods that would 'enforce lifetime obedience in children' (The Independent. September 24th 1999 p.8).

Smack the Child, Praise the Lord: He (the evangelist) said that hitting children with something that had a bit of flexibility - maybe a thin paint stripper would help them understand a wrong (Ridley and Hughes 1999 October 31st p.7).

This perspective reflects a belief that external motivators such as physical punishment rather than more positive parenting approaches are required to shape children into moral human beings. This position, not advocated within contemporary psychological research is instead a feature of lay understandings of smacking and indeed corporal punishment in general (see literature review: Benjet and Kazdin 2003). Although the psychological literature presented different opinions about long term and short-term effects of corporal punishment upon children, positive effects, other than immediate compliance have not been documented (Gershoff 2002). Instead, internalisation of morals was found to be enhanced by allowing children choice and by adopting a negotiated style of parenting (Kuczynski and Hildebrandt 1997). Psychological research appears to have little influence upon lay beliefs about the use of smacking and instead,

explanations about how such opinions and practices perpetuate have been offered by the history of the sociology of childhood and all that it entails for relationships between adults and children.

These first two themes present very different perspectives on the social positioning of children. In contrast, to the first theme, in which the child is seen by some contributors to the newspaper, as a person, not a person becoming, who should therefore enjoy the same rights as adults; in this second theme, the need to control children who are considered to have innate aggressive tendencies has resonance with what James and Prout (1997) refer to as 'the evangelical' child of the eighteenth century. Although this position reflects continuity with the past, it also has parallels within the present. For example, according to Murphy-Cowan and Stringer (2001) and Straus and Mathur (1996) this attitude persists within some fundamentalist Christian families and groups (see Literature Review p.46).

To conclude this section, within the print media, articles opposing the use of smacking sit alongside the position that supports the use of smacking on account of its effectiveness as a disciplinary tool. The effectiveness of a short sharp smack is advocated in some of the most recent articles as well as in the earliest. 1989 heralded the beginning of campaigns for social justice, for children in the home environment, in the formation of the organisation EPOCH (End the Physical Punishment of Children). Only three years previously, corporal punishment had been abolished in all state schools (See Timeline p.19). It is from within this social context that the earlier articles in support of smacking were published and represent a counter argument for smacking to

that presented by EPOCH. Although in the more recent newspaper articles a pro smacking position is sometimes articulated, it is set within a quite different social context. By 2004, a number of countries and states had placed a ban upon the use of smacking by parents in accordance with the UNCRC. Thus, the normative use of smacking by parents in the UK was in a state of flux during the years represented by the selected print media articles. There is evidence in the print media texts, that over time, deeply embedded beliefs that children are different were being challenged by a belief that values children as human beings with the same rights to protection from assault as adults.

4:4:3 Yob Culture: The Long-term Effects of Lack of Parental Discipline.

A recurrent theme, particularly in the letters' pages, was the perceived effects of lack of parental discipline. The term 'yob culture' was frequently used, and appears to symbolise notions of vandalism, violence and disrespect toward property and people by young people.

The term 'yob' appears in the more recent newspaper articles published in 2004. Its usage in this context adds 'clout' to the argument, effectively warning readers of the impending dangers to society if a legislative ban on smacking is enacted. The following three quotations from readers' letters to *The Sun* newspaper firmly put the blame with parents and schools for what is perceived to be a relatively new social problem:

It makes me furious when I see today's youth behave. They have lost all respect for authority. Parents and schools are not allowed to discipline children and national service was dropped (Thorpe 2004 June 14th).

I grew up in an era of smacking and it didn't do me any harm. Maybe if today's yobs had a clip round the ear as they were growing up we would not have the violence and vandalism that we have today

(Barrett 2004 July 9th).

In today's yob society, with kids as young as ten joining the yob culture, a total ban [on smacking] sends these kids the message to do and say and act how they want without consequence (Rankin 2004 July 9th).

Here, smacking is seen as a frontline defence against youth delinquency, and parents who have not employed such tactics are therefore, by default, to blame for social breakdown. The very first mention of parental use of smacking in the print media reviewed (February 1989), firmly placed the responsibility for preventing criminal behaviour amongst the very young with parents.

Ministers are concerned that an increasing number of children develop a pattern of criminal behaviour very young; lack of parental discipline is often a key factor (Hughes 1989 The Independent February 27th p.5).

This perspective, that positions young people in what seems to be a liminal position, neither children yet to be shaped nor moral adults in a state of completion, converges with reports aired in the print media in 1999 about assertions made by some Christian fundamentalists who stated that, 'parental indulgence has brought moral decline to the US and Britain' (Braid 1999 The Independent. September 24th p.8). The logic of this position, which views 'yobs' as failing to reach completion as moral adults, is that like children, their entitlement to the human rights afforded adults, may be contested.

There is a paradox, in that print media representation of ideas about the long-term effects of smacking on the whole, contradicts research findings. The discourse recounted in print media narratives suggest that if parents do not

smack their children there is a strong likelihood that these children will become out of control and will in the future pose a threat to societal cohesion. Research studies that have examined the long-term effects of smacking upon children do not support these print media assertions. Instead, research such as that discussed in the literature review within this thesis, suggest smacking has no long-term detrimental effects upon the individual, nor any long term benefits for the individual or society (for example, see Larzelare 1996). Other research studies conclude, physical punishment is actually associated with aggressive behaviour amongst older children or those in their teens (for example, Turner and Finkelhor 1996; Deater and Dodge 1997 and MacMillan et al 1999). Therefore, it appears that discourse generated by the print media about the long term effects of smacking contradict the findings of empirical research.

The reasons for this paradox are unclear. How issues about the effects of smacking are mediated through the print media raises questions about the role of the media in reflecting or constructing reality. Branston and Stafford (1996) suggest the reality that is reflected in the media is always a construction. Arguably, as previously stated within Chapter Three (Methodology), the same could also be said of research; in that the reality that is presented in research findings is constructed according to both the researchers epistemological position and personal experience. However, consideration of context may help to shed light upon this phenomenon. Firstly, the target audience of print media discourse is quite different to that of psychological research papers. Unlike media audiences, readers of research are encouraged to weigh up the evidence that is presented by asking critical questions about rigour.

A somewhat different approach to the way that discourse is received by audiences has been suggested by Hall (1997). He linked ideas about knowledge and power and explained that through discourse, truth (though not as an absolute concept) is created. For example, if media discourse about possible negative long-term effects of lack of parental discipline is presented as a truth in print media discourse (despite any agreement within researched based evidence to the contrary), widespread shared belief in these assertions may as a consequence result in lack of public support for a ban on smacking. Thereby the 'yob culture' discourse becomes a truth that is underpinned by laws that allows parents to use smacking on children. Mayall (2001) concurs with Hall's theory and helps to explain how discourse changes over time and how new versions of 'truth' are reconstructed, mitigated by the reverberations of the past, the history of shared experience that continue into the present. In other words, since there is a long history of physical punishment in the UK, practiced by our 'cultural relatives' (see literature review: Sparks 2002), physical punishment as an acceptable practice continues to be found within the canon.

To conclude, findings from within the theme, 'Yob Culture: The Long-term Effects of Lack of Parental Discipline' indicate the print media have constructed a discourse about the long-term effects of lack of parental discipline for society that contradicts empirical research findings. The term 'yob culture', as defined by the print media is used to symbolise notions of vandalism, violence and disrespect toward property and people by young people. It is used within the context of argument for opposition to a legal ban on parental use of smacking and warns readers that any such ban on smacking may threaten social cohesion.

4:4:4 Hunting, Smoking and Smacking: The Role of the State

This theme, derived from print media texts, is about the role of the state in intervening in ordinary people's lives; what is considered to be the private sphere of family life. The term 'the nanny state' was coined by the media to refer to what many perceived to be an excessively interventionist style of government. This print media theme includes articles that present arguments both for and against state intervention in parents' use of smacking.

Articles that explicitly voice opinion about the role of the state are features of the more recent literature (2004 and 1999) rather than in the papers that were published in the earlier years, 1994 and 1989. This is not surprising, given the socio-political context, a labour government with collectivist policies that rely on state intervention. Additionally, in the years between 2004 and 1999, and in the year prior to 1999, parliamentary and public debate had focused on proposals for legislative change to outlaw the use of smacking by parents. Indeed, European Union legislation on Human Rights had been tested in the well-publicised case of *A v UK*, 1998 (a boy beaten by his stepfather with a garden cane). In this case, the UK court ruled that the father was using reasonable chastisement. However, the European Court of Human Rights deemed that the boy's human rights had been infringed.

Unlike their UK print media counterparts, the Scottish newspapers, *The Herald* and *The Daily Record* did not feature articles that made reference to the 'nanny state' in relation to parental use of smacking. This may be explained by the political affiliation of these newspapers; they did not support Tory ideology, or this may be because in Scotland this was old news; public debate and

legislative change had already taken place by 2004. However, in 1999, *The Herald* in three articles and *The Daily Record* in no fewer than six separate articles reported the case of a father who was convicted in a Scottish court after smacking his eight-year-old daughter's bare bottom in a dental surgery waiting room. This story seems very much to have acted as a prelude to debate on change in legislation on parental use of smacking within Scotland. It was used in arguments both for and against a complete ban on smacking. Protagonists for a change in the law pointed to confusion about what sort of disciplinary practices were considered to be acceptable, while those that were in opposition to a ban on smacking warned of the potential for criminalising loving parents as exemplified in the story of this family in Scotland.

In juxtaposition with ideas that parents should no longer use physical punishment on children, *The Independent* drew attention to state involvement in the family, with the headline:

'The Smack of Firm Government' (2004. July 6th. p.28).

The following quotation from an article published in the more right-wing UK broadsheet, *The Daily Telegraph*, by the Conservative MP Boris Johnson is typical of the many articles and letters identified in the print media sample. These articles warned against the 'smack of firm government'. In the following brief extract, Johnson, in keeping with political right ideology of Individualism and democracy within the family, states that government intervention denies parents their right to discipline their children, as they know best.

It means substituting the discretion of the state for your discretion (smacking, snacking, smoking, hunting, you name it) (Johnson 2004 July 8thp22).

This is reiterated in the following quotation by Jeremy Clarkson (a television media personality) that appeared in *The Sun*, a U.K. tabloid, which at the time of writing supported 'New Labour' government policy:

They have banned us from using dogs to kill foxes and from using our phones in the car. Now there are plans to ban us from smacking our children and smoking in the pub. How long will it be before someone is sent to prison for not sitting up straight at meal times?

(Clarkson 2004 November 6th p15).

Both Johnson and Clarkson are well known public figures in the UK, each with their own distinct personality and form of outspoken rhetoric. The newspaper editors have allowed the 'voices' of these contributors to speak in a way that the public expect of these commentators. The audience is engaged by the effective use of literary mechanisms such as humour, exaggeration and alliteration to emphasise the sentiments expressed. The dominant message of indignation at state intervention in parenting choices, coupled with the use of exaggeration and irony, suggest that smacking is so trivial a matter that government's are wasting time by adopting such paternalist attitudes.

When this part of the media discourse is understood alongside the previous message: if parents are not allowed to smack their children then an increase in 'yob' culture can be predicted, blame for any resultant decrease in social cohesion in the future can be attributed to the state rather than parents.

Only one article (The Independent 2004) was found that presented an alternative view. The contributor poses that since state intervention had resulted

in improvements in aspects of family life such as measures to improve childcare and maternity and paternity rights why not allow the state to intervene on behalf of children:

Slap happy parents must be stopped: So why the change here (UK legislation) ...the political acknowledgement of childcare for the development of children and measures to improve maternity and paternity rights, all flag up the governments (at times too coercive) involvement in what was once the private business of the family...help is increasingly available and it's beginning to make a difference

(Roberts 2004 May 20th p39)

In summary, the print media narrative predominantly portrays the state as interfering in family life by attempting to impose regulation that limits parents' choice of disciplinary approach. Few articles presented a counter argument in favour of government regulation of smacking as a means to support children and families.

The way in which the state is represented in the media is mirrored in the narratives of participants of this doctoral study. The state as protagonist is a key theme in two parents' exemplar narratives discussed in Chapter Seven. Carol's narrative (Exemplar One), in an emotional account, picks up on the idea presented in the media, that if smacking is completely banned by law, then the logic is that loving parents will be criminalised; children's rights are pitted against the rights of parents. Carol's own experience gives weight to warnings found in the print media. In the second of these exemplar narratives, in contrast to the first, the state as a means of family support and a catalyst for positive change is described by Tracy (Exemplar Two).

4:5 SUMMARY

According to Torfing (1999), the mass media have both social and cultural importance and a function in shaping our social behaviour. Print media texts are cultural products and have significance as agents of social change. The media contribute to our definitions of the world around us, and present ways in which phenomena can be understood (Gripsud 2002).

The smacking discourse, as represented in the print media, tells a story that can help to explain attitudes, which in turn influence practice; practice as parents, or what we say and what we do as nurses, health visitors and midwives who work with parents. Media representations interact with and run alongside historical events, such as legislative change: banning the use of smacking in U.K. state schools (1986) and independent schools (1999), guidance about the use of smacking by childminders, and more recently the use of smacking to discipline children by parents.

The media narrative is complex and dynamic. In the drama presented in the more recent print media texts, the state is portrayed as protagonist. On this social stage, parents' right to choose to smack their own children is pitted against understandings that children are people who accordingly should be afforded protection by the law. Ideas about the consequences for society if parents are not allowed to discipline their children by using smacking have been used to counter any argument for state intervention to ban the use of smacking by introducing legislative change.

Analysis of print media texts has offered insights into the way that the nature of debate within the print media seems to have moved from purely practical considerations about the effectiveness of smacking to dialogue about the human rights of children. Furthermore, if parents share definitions of smacking as presented in the print media, there are repercussions for recognition of children as equals within parent and child relationships. The significance of this for children and parents is that, only when there is this recognition of children as human beings in the present, rather than becoming, can reciprocity be fostered. If such a position is valued, then clearly there are implications for public health practice and social policy in order to support parents in developing the sort of reciprocity within the family that might not have been part of their own childhood experience. Comparisons of themes found within the media's representation of smacking with themes found within participants' narratives are explored in the following chapters.

In the earlier print media texts, the story recounted urged readers to consider the function of smacking; its effectiveness in the short term and for society as a whole in the longer term. This change in discourse over time resonates with the way research has focused upon the topic: with older literature reporting on studies that sought to determine the effects of smacking and more recent articles focusing upon social and political contexts of smacking as highlighted in the literature review presented at the beginning of this thesis. Analysis of print media texts and discovery of the discourse within them has provided a cultural context for the second part of this doctoral study.

Children's voices were rarely represented in the print media; however, this chapter concludes with a quotation from a contribution to *The Daily Telegraph* from a child aged seven:

Sir, I am seven. Please outlaw slapping, but not tickling!

(Bleeker 2004 July 8th p.23).

PART TWO

NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND HEALTH VISITORS

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS FIVE TO SEVEN

In following three chapters, the findings from narrative interviews conducted with parents, grandparents and health visitors are presented in accordance with the different stages of analysis that were carried out sequentially.

Paradigmatic analysis of narratives is presented in chapters five and six and comprises exploration of narrative form and content. In chapter five, findings from across all of the narrative interviews are explored in terms their structure. In the following chapter the thematic content of the narratives is described and discussed. Although within chapters five and six, participants' narratives have been analysed in terms of their structure and content across all narratives, these methodological boundaries are fluid, with one stage of analysis and interpretation feeding into the next. For example, definitions of smacking and ideas about transition identified through analysis of form (structure) provided the beginnings of a framework for interpreting narrative threads within the content (Chapter Six).

Chapter Seven focuses upon six exemplar narratives that illustrate one or more of the themes that were discovered in the previous stage of analysis (paradigmatic or across narrative analysis) and are explored in greater detail within the context of the life story in its entirety.

All quotations from narrative transcripts are identified with a first name pseudonym and a code that determines place and role. This is followed by a number indicating the stanza number that was used to identify sections of narrative by theme within interview transcripts as indicated below.

HV Health Visitor	P Parent	G Grandparent
I Island	M Mainland	
Example: (Joni P M: 5). Joni is a mainland parent. The extract is taken from stanza five of her interview transcript.		

CHAPTER FIVE

PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE OF A LIFE STORY

5:1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore structural aspects of narrative interviews conducted with all participants. Since the construction of the narratives can be regarded as a dialogic process, reflection upon the way that the talk was produced and performed is included as a structural aspect of the study findings. For example, this is illustrated in the way that some participants contextualised their narratives by providing geographical and demographic information. A further aspect of the structure of these narrative interviews relates to the way that the stories were ordered and how the use of narrative methods allowed participants to recount the story in their own way and at their own pace. A further aspect of the structure of these narratives is exploration of the language used by participants to describe smacking and the way this influences individual's personal definitions of smacking, attitudes and behaviour.

5:2 SETTING THE NARRATIVE IN CONTEXT

Flick (2006), in his description of narrative interview techniques suggested that participants generally provide contextual information; they tell you what they think that you need to know in order to make sense of their stories. This contextual information was included in the narratives in two different ways, the personal and the general. The personal context often set the scene for a

description of the experience of childhood, such as the freedoms afforded by a rural childhood (as in Edith's (M G), Cathy's (I HV) and Carol's (I P HV) narratives). Other personal contextual information such as that included in Joni's (M P) narrative included accounts of personal family history that as Joni put it, "... was the making of me in many ways" (Joni M P: 3).

General contextual information such as local history and geography, changing area demographics and case load demographics that influence public health practice rather than personal contextual information was provided by those participants who were health visitors. For example, participants living on the Western Isles clearly positioned themselves as islanders and conveyed to me those details that spoke of the uniqueness of their self-identity, and the uniqueness of their situation. Health visitors living and working in the Western Isles painted a much more detailed historical, demographic and geographical picture than their colleagues in Fife. Western Isles health visitors used this contextual information to 'allow' me into their world. Additionally, I suspect that Fife health visitors acknowledged me as a fellow health visitor to be 'one of them', and not in need of this kind of information, perceiving that I was likely to be able to visualise their working and living situation since I too had worked as a health visitor in Fife. Small asides such as, 'you'll have seen that yourself' (Judy: M P HV 11), indicated to me that there was a perceived understanding that this was an experience or an aspect of knowledge that we as health visitors shared. However, just as Flick (2006) suggests, Fife health visitors did offer specific demographic information about the areas that they worked in or their caseload composition where they thought that it had particular significance for the context of their narrative and where it might have been perceived that I did

not have 'insider' knowledge. For example, Judy, a health visitor based in a coastal fishing village discussed the challenges of engaging with families born and bred in her area and the role of the extended family.

It's very much a matriarchal society in the fishing side of the community; lots of very strong women, that have had to be, because their husbands are away at sea such a lot. I can think of quite a few; there's no way that you'd mess with them! They're very much in charge. I mean if no one else in the family has breast fed you haven't got a hope, if they wean at ten weeks then they wean at ten weeks. You know who's in charge. I suppose discipline as well (Judy M P HV: 10).

The following journal entry records some of my reflection upon my etic perspective as a Fife Health Visitor:

Journal Extract Three:

I think I know Fife quite well, after all I worked as a health visitor here in two different locations for twelve years. Fife, in South East Scotland is quite unique. Though a mix of both rural and urban areas, it doesn't have a city, yet it has a thriving and relatively wealthy university town. Although the smell of linoleum is still on the air in central Fife, the economic fortunes have changed radically over the past fifty years with the demise of industries such as mining, ship building and the fishing industry. Although people born in Fife describe themselves as 'Fifers' and the rest of us as 'incomers', this identity is by no means homogenous. Subcultures exist according to employment; for example, the mining community, or the fishing community. I suspect that this too is an overly simplistic and stereotyped representation. I don't know what it is like to work within the fishing community: my experience has been with rural farming families and with ex mining families, as well as with many parents who commute to cities outside Fife for work. During my time as a health visitor, families from ethnic minority groups were not a feature of the Fife population.

My personal memories include conversations with families who no longer had extended family close by to help care for children or for older relatives, as a shortage of local authority housing and the need to seek employment elsewhere often forced younger family members to move away from their

extended family. My health visiting experience has included working with families experiencing a number of different stressful life events, some of which can be attributed to socio-economic inequalities. My experience of working with families in Fife is probably similar to that of other Fife Health Visitors according to data within annual public health reports such as those provided the Fife Director of Public Health, and the various Fife Community Health Partnership strategies (NHS Fife 2008).

I feel quite confident that I will be able to empathise with Fife health visitor participants and to understand the Fife Health Visiting context, while at the same time I'm prepared to learn something new about unique health visiting contexts.

April 2008

I arrived in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis with my own assumptions about what it might be like to grow up in the Outer Hebrides; assumptions that were based upon previous reading such as Alistair McIntosh's account of growing up on Lewis, its politics and social history (McIntosh 2001), media accounts, conversations with friends and a previous visit as a tourist to the annual folk festival where it rained solidly for four days and nights. The purpose in including these reflective comments is to demonstrate the way in which my assumptions were overturned by the conversations I had with participants, and because it allowed me to reflect upon the experience of being a researcher, an outsider looking in, and for its contribution to the need for reflexivity.

I admit to setting out on my journey to the Outer Hebrides with a mental picture of family life characterised by a dour fundamental Presbyterian regimen, in which the Sabbath was rigidly observed and in which the role of children was to obey their parents who in turn were informed by a Calvinist ethic of work and family relationships and church life. I fully expected to find that participants had

either experienced or practiced the biblical proverb, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child...' quite literally (Proverbs 23: 14).

As a tourist I had experienced the stunning natural beauty of the place and this in my pre-conceived 'wisdom' was juxtaposed with the idea of a somewhat harsh way of living. This time, visiting as a researcher with an interest in family and community life, rather than as a tourist, my first task was simply to observe and to take note of what I saw as I meandered around the principal town on foot. Although the Hebrides are part of Scotland and the UK, I was looking for a sense of the different. This sense of otherness was made apparent initially by the wide use of the Gaelic language on notices and signs and upon hearing its use at the airport and in the shops.

Along side the natural beauty and island architecture I observed what to me represented symbols of conflict, a Women's Aid centre, a mental health drop in centre and an addictions service for problem drinking. Additionally I observed that there seemed to be a strong church presence, including advertisements for church services placed in shop windows and on notice boards in the town. Since my first visit to the island a fabulous arts centre had been built in the centre of town and this became my place for thinking and reflection during my five day stay. These initial observations seemed to support my earlier assumptions and I was keen to hear from health visitors an insider perspective.

The following accounts about being an islander, living and working in the Outer Hebrides have been extrapolated from health visitors' narratives and are presented below thematically.

5:2:1 Demography

According to Cathy (I HV) and Mhairi (I P HV), the island population overall has declined over the past thirty to forty years, and most acutely the population of younger people. The population of older people is twenty-five percent higher than on the Scottish mainland. In Cathy's passionate account she described her falling caseload of fifty children under five years with only three births imminent in the coming year. She wryly referred to these 'three breeding pairs' suggesting that 'if they were a bird colony' the state might intervene to protect the habitat and support ecological initiatives. This decrease in the population of young children has already resulted in school closures in the remote parts of the islands. Cathy remarked that in a remote area in her 'patch' there had been no births for the past five years. The General Registrar's Office report on the Scottish Census 2001 and the Outer Hebrides Migration Study (2007) offer support for these anecdotal accounts.

Cathie emphatically pointed out those Scottish Government initiatives to support remote and rural areas by building sustainable communities in the Western Isles, in practice meant in Stornoway, the organisational centre. As a consequence, families were relocating from remote areas of the islands to Stornoway and its immediate environs, where they could enjoy access to supermarkets that supplied goods more cheaply, schools, a centre for higher education and sporting facilities. The reduced necessity to travel long distances allowed savings to be on fuel, which is more costly in remote areas. This relocation is evident in the number of new houses built in and around Stornoway. According to The Outer Hebrides Migration Study (2007) this

centralisation of goods and services in Stornoway is part of an initiative designed to curb outward migration of younger people.

Both Mhairi (I P HV) and Diana (I HV) spoke about the large family size of their childhood and their parents' childhoods, saying that in the past a family of six children was common and that this had reduced to four in the eighties and nowadays most families were limited to one or two children. All participants emphasised the importance of the extended family to 'native indigenous island families':

Family life is more central here than on the mainland, we know more of our extended family and use them for childcare and so on (Diana I HV: 5).

This was further emphasised by Mhairi in her narrative as she spoke about the way her extended family on the island would send salted fish to them in Glasgow where she spent her teenage years. All health visitors saw the extended family as a crucial support mechanism for families with young children. This theme was developed further in comparisons made with 'incomer' families who had none of these extended family networks for support.

5:2:2 Religion and Family Life

Cathie also pointed to fundamental differences in the more laissez faire values and practices of incomers, compared to island family life:

They (island families) use cutlery and they sit together at the table for meals, and they behave themselves (Cathie I HV: 5).

Cathie, like Eilidh (I P HV) associated this with the strong religious background and teaching of the church that influenced beliefs and practices and values associated with being part of an island family.

The church had a very strong influence upon my parent's lives, as it did for everyone in the village, it was part of the culture (Eilidh I P HV: 2).

Carol (I P HV) described an active church going community stating that in her church, that has the biggest Sunday School in the town; seventy-eight children regularly attend.

According to Cathie, Eilidh and Lesley, religious teaching within the United Free Church and the Free Church of Scotland promoted a strict moral code, boundaries for behaviour and self-discipline that served to help to reduce problems and the need for any use of corporal punishment on children. It underpinned expectations of children's behaviour, to help out in the home, to never tell lies, steal or to hit others. They led disciplined lives though not necessarily enforced by the use of corporal punishment.

Within the Free Church of Scotland this ordering of everyday life is extended to relationships within marriage. Carol stated that:

The women are often, well not down trodden, but they're much like in the old days, the woman is second rate to the man. The girls aren't allowed to wear trousers or to cut their hair. So they're very strict, even to this day

(Carol I P HV: 10).

Tying up the swings on the Sabbath was a practice continued up until around 2005. This was mentioned by almost all participants and served as a metaphor

for the paradox of the idyllic childhood freedom to roam around the fields and countryside to play while at the same time experiencing the lack of freedom to play on the Sabbath. Doreen (I P HV) described the Sabbath of her childhood as a day when, “you literally did nothing, you went to church and the rest of the day was spent with family”. Participants agreed that this keeping of the Sabbath did in some way support family life as time was spent together talking. However they did concede that this lack of activity could result in frustration and frayed tempers especially for incomers who had not become accustomed to this way of life.

Carol and Doreen explained how they and many families today modify the keeping of the Sabbath by doing activities such as swimming and other sports together as a family. Additionally, they fully supported the recent introduction of flights off the island to the Scottish mainland on Sundays.

5:2:3 Economic Activity

Maureen (P I HV) described her childhood, growing up in a remote area in the fifties and sixties; her father was a Harris Tweed weaver and like all other ‘weaving’ families in the village kept cows. The village children would bring the cows down from their pasture for milking daily after school. This is a practice that has declined, with very few families keeping a cow these days. Harris Tweed weaving has however enjoyed a recent resurgence by its promotion in couture (McIntosh 2001). Other fathers were engaged in the fishing industry and in the merchant navy. Work in the fish processing factories was also largely man’s work, with most mothers being home mothers. In more recent times a major source of employment has been off shore with the North Sea oil

companies situated around Aberdeen. Mhairi (I P HV) explained that with rising oil prices one or two families had started to 'cut the peats' again, for fuel (this I was able to experience first hand by invitation from one of the participants).

5:2:4 Social capital, cultural conservatism and identity

By providing contextual information about what it is like to live and work on the Outer Hebrides, participants positively conveyed something of their identity, their uniqueness both at the level of being part of a cohesive community and at an individual level.

Participants described a community of the past and the present in which community members looked out for each other. Maureen (I P HV) described how as children they knew everyone who was around in the community and that the whole community 'looked after' the children and in this way shared responsibility with parents for children's safety and wellbeing. None of the participants viewed this sense of community cohesiveness negatively. However, in contrast, the Outer Hebrides Migration Study (Hall Aitken and National Centre for Migration Studies 2007) suggests that some female outward migrants have said that the claustrophobic and judgemental nature of rural community life were factors in their decision to leave the island. Similarly, the above study reports on interviewees that identified the disproportionate influence of churches in some parts of the islands, saying that, "this cultural conservatism stifled their personal choices and restricted necessary change" (p32).

Reflecting upon this contextual aspect of participants' narratives, I was reminded of Giles-Sim and Lockhart's (2005) work on 'global cultural types' (see

Literature Review). It seems that most of the island participants shared a philosophy that is in accordance with Giles-Sim and Lockhart's 'hierarchical cultural type. Structures such as the church and religious teachings were valued and such cultural prescriptions were seen to provide direction for way family life should be conducted. However, it appears that when there is tension between dominant values and values that represent individual freedom or autonomy there is conflict, which sometimes results in a need to migrate from the island. Therefore, there are possible implications for island families who wish to adopt parenting approaches that are not consistent with current cultural prescription. How individual participants have made sense of changing definitions of smacking and the implications for parenting more generally are considered in the following two chapters.

4:2:5 Health Visiting Practice

All participants except one had studied nursing and health visiting on the Scottish mainland in either Inverness or Glasgow; all recounted how they had felt the strong pull of the islands and had returned there to work and to their families and to raise their own families. The exception was a new health visitor who had studied at the relatively new Western Isles Campus of Stirling University on the Isle of Lewis.

All participants recounted the difficulties in recruiting new staff to the islands. In terms of organisation and skills, Cathie (I HV) stated that skill mix was possible in Stornoway, but for those working in the remote areas of the Western Isles, they needed to be expert in a range of nursing and health visiting skills. They

needed to be able to work autonomously and to be able to 'think on their feet' as they were most often working in isolation.

Due to the geography it was sometimes difficult to access training courses. For example not all health visitors who wished to do so had been able to complete the 'Triple P' parenting training and that this has inhibited their working with parents to foster positive approaches to parenting. Similarly, it was difficult to set up groups for parents in the more remote parts of the islands due to sparse population concentrations and the sheer amount of travelling that was necessary.

For the reasons given above in relation to the lack of extended family support, health visitors agreed that one of their main priorities was in working with incomer families who were experiencing both culture shock and social isolation and sometimes depression. Eilidh (I P HV) explained that for incomers, "moving to the islands was like coming to another country".

Eilidh had experienced working as a health visitor in an inner city area of the Scottish mainland in recent years and currently in a remote part of Lewis. She described how now she was able 'to do what health visitors were meant to do', for example, to promote health by engaging in public health initiatives to support healthy eating and sensible drinking rather than the reactive style of health visiting that was required when working with families in crisis in the inner city. She stated that the challenges were different, on the mainland the priorities were with families experiencing a number of stressors brought about by poverty, while on the island the priority was to work with isolated families to promote

mental health and well being and with families where problem drinking was an issue. She described different thresholds for intervention and having time as an island health visitor to assess and monitor post-natal depression, while in the inner city more pressing issues such as housing, child protection and drug abuse were higher on her agenda.

According to health visitors, one of the ways in which the keeping of the Sabbath has impacted upon health visiting work is in relation to domestic violence.

Pubs close their doors at 11:30 on a Saturday night, so it's as much down your throat as possible before closing time, then home to your wife and arguments. You have to look good for the community on the Sabbath, but behind closed doors there's a lot going on (Eilidh I P HV: 8).

I left the Western Isles with a changed perception of people's experience of living in a society that was in the past and for some families in the present, regulated by the church. It did not seem to be characterised by punitive child rearing methods, instead the boundaries for behaviour that were regulated by religious processes were viewed by participants as helpful and protective of the needs of the family. However, as in Eilidh's quotation above, the island idyll is for health visitors working in the Western Isles was tempered by the need to look for health needs that might be hidden behind a possible façade of cohesive family and community life.

Living a life in accordance with dominant cultural prescriptions that were supported by the church, was perceived to contribute to social cohesiveness, however, as illustrated in the previous quotation, the need to keep the Sabbath

exacerbated issues that sometimes worked against harmonious family life. While it is out with the scope of this doctoral thesis to consider the effects of alcoholism on family life, a broader implication is for the way in which island families have responded to changing societal norms associated with corporal punishment and children's rights. Democracy within the family is held in tension with powerful external cultural prescription.

Island health visitor participants identified themselves as different to mainland participants on account of the island geography and culture. Although some would allude to my understanding of health visiting priorities, their narratives conveyed a sense of the uniqueness of island life.

5:3 EPISODIC NARRATIVE INTERVIEWING IN PRACTICE

Each life story narrative contains emplotted small stories such as those recounted in the following section. By this I mean those reconstructions of events and experience that have a beginning middle and end, and that serve to allow the listener (or now the reader, as these spoken stories are transformed into text by the process of transcription), to interpret the meaning of these events in the context of the life story (Polkinghorne 1995). In accordance with Flick's episodic Interviewing strategy, asking the participant to recount particular situations that they had experienced in relation to the more general statements that they made was helpful in generating these small stories of experiential knowledge that underpin semantic knowledge (Flick 2006). For example, Hannah (M P) had just related to me how she had started to use Non Violent

Communication (NVC). I asked her to provide an example of how she might use NVC. In the brief extract that follows, Hannah used the present situation by way of illustration. At this point the interview was interrupted by one of the children who came into the room to show us the alligator costume that he was wearing.

Well, if I was to use it just now, I would say something like, 'Are you really wanting some attention just now, or are you wanting to join in this conversation with this new person [me]?' So I would try to identify what his needs are as opposed to the behaviour that he's doing that I don't like. I might say something like, 'well we really need some time to talk, so may be we could make ten minutes at the end where you could have Susan to yourself', or something like that (Hannah M P: 5).

This technique of asking the participant to recount a situated example was not always required, as some participants were 'natural' story- tellers, punctuating their whole narrative with illustrative examples situated in their own experience.

5:3:1 The Temporal Ordering Of Narratives

Each participant's narrative is a life story, a temporal ordering of events and experience. In all but one (Jill: M P) of these stories, the participant began by recounting their experience of childhood and then moved on to talk about their experience of being a parent. This ordering reflects my introductory explanations with each participant about the narrative style of the interview, saying that I was interested in the story of their lives beginning with their childhood, and a reminder about the focus of my study. However, Jill began her story by describing the present, telling me about the books that she was reading and how these had influenced the way that she was parenting her two children,

and in so doing was starting to present to me a particular presentation of herself, her identity as a learning parent and how she perceived her relationship with her children, a theme that is returned to in the following chapter:

So, I'm trying to be nice to them, more praise than criticism, sort of manipulating them that way. I've been reading this book on unconditional parenting this last few days, and suddenly realising that praise is on the same spectrum as punishment and actually they need to be working it out for themselves. So I'm trying that to some extent, saying, 'oh, that's really lovely darling, what do you like about it? Are you pleased with it?'

(Jill: P M 1)

Although each interview essentially followed a chronological order, as situations from the past were recalled as the interview progressed, these were recounted. For example, Janice, a mainland grandparent, had recounted a number of episodes that were about her experiences as a parent and had gone on to define what the term smacking meant to her. Then she recalled a situation that was included in her narrative as an example of a time when she responded in a way that was out of character, and against her deeply held principles for non-violence:

I've just remembered something else that I've always been terribly ashamed of... (Janice: M G 7).

She went on to describe the incident with great clarity and detail, a small story about a time when during a performance at the theatre she reacted to her young son's constant requests for sweeties by squeezing his hand tightly, digging her fingernails into the palms of his hands.

On reflection, this kind of structure to a conversation is reminiscent of those encountered in my health visiting experience; when only after a time the 'narrator' felt the required level of trust in the relationship to allow inclusion of stories they perceived to be sensitive or that might shock me, the listener. Similarly, these narrative interviews took place over the course of around an hour; after a 'settling in' period, the participant felt at ease enough to relate a more sensitive story.

Although chronology is considered in this chapter as an element of the structure of participants' narrative accounts, chronology and ideas about transition were also identified as narrative threads in the following phase of analysis, paradigmatic analysis of content. These aspects of content and their significance for understandings of smacking are explored in chapter six.

In the following section, participants' use of language to describe smacking is described and how it contributes to the construction of contrasting definitions of smacking is explored.

5:4 DEFINITIONS OF SMACKING

Both findings from literature review and findings from analysis of print media representation of smacking revealed diverse understandings of smacking. For this reason, during the course of each narrative interview, participants were asked to define what the term 'smacking' meant to them. I was concerned that if I pre-empted participants own understandings of smacking with a definition of my own, this would in some way limit participants in the telling of their stories by

disallowing connections to be made between situation and construction of meaning.

Participants' definitions of smacking revealed a complex set of beliefs that merit further exploration. The diverse range of meanings offered by participants has possible implications for the way that smacking was perceived, as either a violent and abusive action or as a legitimate non-violent action. These personal definitions about smacking influenced actual parental behaviour. For example, Kirsty (M P) stated that she thought it "ridiculous" that the state interfered in parenting. However, she suggested that although she thought, "some parents may take it too far", parents should be able to use smacking as a warning and then "a wee tap on the bum", if this warning was not heeded by the child. This was the practice that she had adopted with her young child. Kirsty's beliefs that smacking does no harm when used within the parameters that she had set, are summed up in her narrative as follows:

We were all disciplined like that, so why's that not good enough for my child
(Kirsty M P: 13).

In contrast, Ilyana (M P) stated that although she differentiated between hitting and smacking, with smacking being less forceful and less likely to cause pain, neither was practiced in her family with her young son. The following quotation is Ilyana's response to being asked about her definition of smacking:

I think that if you just smack a child then it's just a little warning, and you don't mean to cause pain; though I think that the child can experience pain physically and may be emotionally, but hitting is different (Ilyana M P: 5).

This categorisation of smacking as a legitimate action or not, was influenced by a number of different factors; the reason for the smack, the part of the body that was involved, the age of the child and the use of implements such as the belt; perception of power relations amongst children and adults, and views about children's rights. Discussion about definitions of smacking, though also a feature of the thematic analysis of narrative threads found within interview transcripts (see Chapter Six), are included in this structural analysis because there is a link between the language that is used to describe events and the meanings that were constructed and how this was played out in daily life.

Participants provided two broad definitions of what constitutes smacking. However, some participants' responses were sometimes ambiguous and seemed to contain inconsistencies. Issues about memory, inconsistencies and probable lies within narrative autobiographical data have been explored in the narrative literature as methodological issues for narrative research, (Gardner 2001, Rogers. 1999, Watson. 2006) and are discussed in relation to the current doctoral study in Chapter Three and again in Chapter Eight.

5:4:1 Smacking is violence

In the first definition, that I have labelled '*smacking is violence*', smacking was regarded unequivocally as hitting and as a violent act towards children and as such was categorised as abusive behaviour. Interestingly, around two thirds of the participants shared this view (see Appendix Eight). For these participants, there were no circumstances in which hitting a child could be condoned. This view was underpinned by personal ideologies about the nature of childhood; children are a vulnerable group in need of protection, they should be afforded the same level of human rights as adults, and children who have been the

recipients of corporal punishment are likely to use violence as a way to resolve conflict. Although these participants often used the term *vulnerable* to describe children, many of them did acknowledge the agency of children in a positive sense. For example, by describing how they were able to use negotiation with their children to achieve mutually agreed solutions to problems or disagreements. For example, Laura (M P), a mother of three young children described how she is learning to recognise her children's needs and to help them to understand that she too has needs, rather than adopting a more authoritarian approach:

I'm starting to react to the things that they do, and thinking, what is it that I want? Some co-operation, or I've got an appointment and I want to get there on time and they're playing; they've got some other need, for fun for example. ...I say, 'I really need some co-operation here, I've got an appointment at two o'clock and we've got five minutes'. Then it's a much more coming together for the teamwork thing, rather than me being like the big bad mum wielding the stick (Laura M P: 4).

The way in which Laura's definition intersects with self-identity as a good mother is discussed in greater depth in the following chapter, within the context of ideas about transition and again in Laura's narrative exemplar in Chapter Seven.

Conversely, some participants that subscribed to a definition of smacking as legitimate parenting behaviour, presented the idea of children's agency in a more negative light. They implied that they believed that children today did not respect adults; they had too much power, brought about by their understanding of their rights, and that they were able to use this to intimidate adults such as

their teachers and parents. This is illustrated in both Gwen's (M G) and Tracy's (M P) narratives:

I just think that you should be able to bring them up as you like. I think that children are getting far too much say about how we bring them up and that's causing all the problems; running riot and all the rest of it. Not that smacking will stop stuff like that happening like, but it's giving them another way to get back at their parents (Tracy M P: 5).

Additionally, Gwen was concerned that one of the reasons that parents are less likely to smack their children these days was related to media pressure and also fear of legal action brought against them by their children.

Children are blackmailing their parents; 'you can't do x,y or z or I'll get the police to you' (Gwen M G: 9).

Gwen's concerns echo media rhetoric presented in the previous chapter within the theme 'Yob Culture'. What seems to be implicit in Gwen and Tracy's beliefs is, parents should be able to choose without interference from the state, how they discipline their children and this may include the use of smacking. For Gwen and Tracy, children are perceived to be in a greater position of power than parents, with parents' rights held in tension with children's rights. There are implications for pitching the rights of one group against those of the other, in that a stance that focuses upon one group as being less equal, is less likely to foster reciprocity within parent and child relationships in the way described by Mayall (2000, see literature review).

Only one of the Island participants (Doreen: I P HV) defined smacking as violence. All other participants that held this view were either Fife health visitors or mainland parents and grandparents. Only one mainland grandparent regarded smacking as a legitimate aspect of parenting. This feature of the findings overlaps with aspects of thematic content and is discussed further in the following chapter in relation to 'transition'.

Participants that subscribed to the definition, 'smacking is violence', made the following statements that go beyond simple descriptions of the action of smacking:

"Smacking is hitting" (Sarah MPHV: 8; Lily M G: 12; Rita M P HV: 3; Doreen I P HV: 3).

"Smacking is violence" (Janice M G: 6&8; Jill M P: 16).

"It's an act of the powerful with someone more vulnerable" (Doreen I P HV; Jill M P: 16; Carla M P: 3; Geraldine M P HV:8).

"Smacking is assault. It's bullying. Just as when an adult hits another it is thought of as assault" (Doreen I P HV: 3; Alison M G HV: 7; Pauline M P: 19; Moira M P: 10; Melanie M P: 2).

"It's a violation of children's rights" (Geraldine M P HV: 8).

"Parents who smack are out of control" (Joni M P: 10).

"Parents act as role models and a child that is hit is more likely to use this behaviour themselves" (Lesley M P: 5).

"It's part of a wider context of violence in British society" (Joni M P: 10).

These participants share in common a view that the use of corporal punishment is an adult's abuse of power and that it should be regarded as a form of bullying. There is agreement amongst these participants that children should be regarded as vulnerable and in need of protection and guidance, a position that emphasises dependence of children upon adults, but at the same time asserts that children should be afforded the same rights as adults by society. This position was particularly emphasised by some participants who used terms such as 'little person' when referring to their child.

Participants offered personal stories about their experience of smacking and often contextualised it with reference to their wider beliefs about the nature of violence in UK society. For example, Joni stated that she believed that parents who smacked were out of control; this reflects how she herself felt when she had used physical chastisement with her daughter. She then went on to explain that she believed that the reason that smacking has been considered to be an acceptable form of parenting behaviour for so long is because violence is deeply embedded in our society, as an almost innate predisposition to respond to conflict with violence. In this way, Joni positioned herself as a parent struggling to stay in control and to avoid the use of smacking, while at the same time she is positioned as a member of a potentially violent society in which cultural prescription endorses the use of smacking. This is a theme that recurred in narratives of other participants who described a deeply embedded 'default position' to which they returned when feeling frustrated, tired or stressed, despite their efforts to use alternative and non-violent ways to be a parent.

When the default is being fought against all of the time, you have your slip moments when you just don't manage to do it (Laura M P: 9).

Further examples of events (episodic knowledge) that took place in the life course of participants, that have helped to shape understandings of smacking, and in turn experience of transition, will be explored further in chapters six and seven.

5:4:2 Smacking is legitimate parenting behaviour

In the second broad category of definitions, that I have labelled 'smacking is legitimate parenting behaviour', smacking was regarded to be a legitimate form of parental behaviour that could be used in specific circumstances and in a particular way. Legitimate in the sense that it was deemed to be acceptable by these participants and also in the sense that this definition best reflects current legislation about the use of smacking by parents in Scotland and in the rest of the UK. Concepts of smacking as a legitimate parenting behaviour runs in parallel to definitions of corporal punishment, which emphasise, the effects of smacking upon children are dependent upon particular conditions, such as frequency and severity, as previously discussed in the Literature Review (see Benjet and Kazdin 2003, Larzelare 2000).

Participants that recognised smacking as legitimate, rationalised their beliefs about the practice of smacking and what constitutes violence in relation to a number of different factors. Smacking was differentiated from hitting and was not considered to be a form of assault or to be abusive. Some participants regarded smacking to be something completely different to the more forceful

hitting; understanding it to be simply something that was part of a parents' responsibility, while others thought of smacking as being on one end of a continuum with abuse or assault at the other. This differentiation between hitting and smacking was sometimes made in accordance with participants' understandings about age. As in some other recent studies (Anderson, Brownlie and Murray 2002; Hazel et al 2003), participants zoned the body in relation to their understanding of physical punishment. Lastly, participants rationalised the use of smacking in relation to motivation.

5:4:3 Embodied definitions of smacking

According to McGillivray (1997) the law about the physical chastisement of children has focused upon children's bodies rather than children's minds or stage of emotional development. This is evident in current legislation for Scotland, and England and Wales (Scottish Executive 2002, Department for Education and Skills 2004).

Supporters of the use physical punishment on children, in this study, defined smacking in accordance with current law. For example, there was broad agreement that children should not be hit with implements such as the belt, slipper or cane, and that children should not be hit around the head or face. When participants referred to the severity or force behind the smack, there was some disparity, with some participants stating that the smack should not cause injury or leave a mark, while others understood that an effective smack was one that inflicted a modicum of pain. Here, children's bodies are fragmented in a Cartesian dualism between body and mind (McGillivray 1997, Brownlie 2006). There is acknowledgement of the pain that is felt by the physical body, rather

than feelings of pain that arise from embarrassment or humiliation. The following quotations from participants' narratives serve to illustrate the way that discipline was embodied and how this contributed to participants understanding of smacking.

A slap is across the face, and a smack is on the bottom with this part of the hand (shows palm of her hand) and a hit would be, er, more of a thump (Maureen I P HV: 5).

A smack is just one very light tap, not on the head or face or a bare arm or leg. Just a sign that I'm trying to tell you something here, not to actually inflict hurt on a child...To me that's what a smack is – nothing that would leave a mark (Ailsa I P HV: 3).

A smack to me is the same as I had when I was a kid. Round the thigh or a tap round the bum; not too hard, but not too light so that they don't feel it (Kirsty M P: 8).

A smack is a tap on the hand or bottom. A good hiding is being physically smacked good and hard on the bottom. A wee tap on the bottom or hands does no harm, but I don't believe in corporal punishment. They [her children] definitely got smacked on the fingers or on the bottom, but it was rarely hard enough to make them cry (Edith M G: 9).

This zoning of children's bodies in relation to physical punishment by participants reflects an attempt by parents to be in control of children, while at the same time doing no harm, by choosing to smack parts of the body that were deemed less likely to result in long term harm. Participants agreed that harsher forms of punishment such as hitting around the head, or using implements constitute abusive behaviour.

Despite legislative 'guidance' about the use of 'justifiable assault' (Brownlie 2006), Maggie a mother and health visitor, raised an important issue about its application, saying:

The amount of force used to smack depends upon how much of a temper you're in. That's the truth as well. When I look back, when I did smack, I probably used more force than I wanted to – because I was angry

(Maggie: 7).

Despite an intension not to use forceful smacking, under stress, Maggie returned to what Laura (as in previous quotation on p.203) referred to as the 'default position'.

Participants' constructions of children's bodies in relation to their use of physical punishment intersect with their understanding about age.

5:4:4 Definitions of smacking and children's ages

Some participants in this study wrongly believed that smacking was completely outlawed in Scotland: others understood that it should not be used on children under three years of age. These positions reflect initial proposals that any ban of smacking should apply to children under three years of age. Discussion of parliamentary debate and the public consultation exercise were given wide media coverage prior to the amendments that were made to existing law in 2002, as observed previously in Chapter Four.

It was in relation to the age of children that participants made further differentiation about what was acceptable and what was not. Although only two participants in their definitions of smacking limited it's use to children of around three years (Mhairi, a health visitor from the Western Isles), or children of three

to seven years (Gwen, a mainland grandparent), other participants firmly stated that it was wrong to smack a bare bottom, or that smacking should not take place in any public place. It is possible that for these participants, there were sexual connotations associated with smacking a bare body, and thereby this behaviour was located as assault or abuse.

My sister's husband took their child upstairs and took down his pants and gave him a smack on the bottom. I said to my sister, 'he can't do that', it's child abuse'. My sister said, 'no it's not', but I think that it is

(Melanie M P: 13).

There seems to be recognition here of the possibility that children, particularly older children, who were to use Brownlie's term, 'nearing completion', can experience humiliation (Brownlie 2006 p.4).

It is possible that these participants were informed by a long running story that was presented in a wide cross section of UK newspapers and broadcast media, that for over the course of a year reported on the case of a father who had smacked the bare bottom of his seven year old daughter, in a public place, as described in the previous chapter. This particular story was recalled by a number of participants and it seems to have influenced public perception in two different ways. Firstly, an understanding that if you smack a child in public there are likely to be unpleasant consequences in terms of unwanted media attention, personal shame and embarrassment, and possible legal action. Secondly, and I think more importantly, attention became less focused upon the legitimacy of smacking to the environmental context in which it took place. This idea was reinforced by some health visitor participants whose concerns were that corporal punishment by parents would be confined to the 'closet', and as a

consequence, parents would be less likely to ask for advice or support in parenting from health visitors.

Some participants offered what McGillivray (1997) describes as a 'tutorial motive' for using smacking with young children, stating that it was at a young age that they needed to be taught 'right from wrong'; young children needed to be taught the social conventions of the day in order for them to participate fully in society as adults. This is a view that is supported by current legislation that allows parents, but not teachers, to use smacking to discipline children.

Edith, a mainland grandmother, elucidated her views further during discussion about changes to Scottish law on corporal punishment. Her rationale for using smacking to teach young children right from wrong was that children were different to adults; they have different needs. In the following extract a clear distinction is made between the pre rational child and the adult. In the extract below, young children are considered to be not yet 'real selves' and therefore the rules that apply to adults are not applicable.

I honestly don't think that for a two or three year old a small tap on the hands or a wee smack on the bottom does any harm...The rule that says that you wouldn't smack another adult I don't think holds water (Edith M G: 10).

Edith went on to give a situated example of a time when she smacked her nineteen-month-old grandson's hands, when despite being asked not to touch the television he had continued to do so. She clearly did not wish to hurt him. She went on to acknowledge the way that relationships between parents and children have changed over time.

He wasn't going to listen to the spoken word, and it was a piece of electrical equipment, and I think that there was no harm in it (the smack); at that age it was gone and forgotten. I think that we have got to make them more socially aware of the consequences. We used to lay down the law, why we're not to do it – 'because I say so'. Nowadays we try to be to be more reasonable with them. I honestly don't like smacking (Edith M G: 10).

Despite not all participants having an accurate understanding of current legislation, participants seem to suggest that their understanding of definitions of corporal punishment and abuse was related to understanding about age. However, children were usually referred to as young children or older children rather than with reference to specific ages when discussing the use of smacking.

Issues that concern the age of children in relation to corporal punishment are complex. Rather than simply relying upon developmental theory, that suggests that children of a particular age, such as below three years are not able to comprehend punishment or to feel guilt and therefore should not be smacked (as initially proposed by the Scottish Government), instead seem to be concerned with what Mayall (1998) terms the 'time future' rather than the 'time present' of children. It is this idea, also iterated previously within print media narratives (see Chapter Four), which allows the sharp short smack that does no lasting physical harm to children's bodies to be permitted. However, there was cognisance of the older 'almost complete' child's feelings of embarrassment or humiliation on being smacked and it is this that seems to influence parents' decisions not to use corporal punishment with older children. These findings corroborate Brownlie's (2006) analysis of participants' responses within the Scottish survey (Anderson et al 2002) that suggest that it is the older child's

greater understanding or competence that differentiates smacking from abuse. Similar findings within a UK survey published in 2010 by the Children's Society and NSPCC, indicate that those polled believed physical punishment to be more psychologically damaging to older children than younger children.

Participants' motivation for using smacking and their opinions about the effects of smacking upon children was also influenced by their definitions of smacking. Although this was sometimes explained by participants in accordance with their understanding of children's ages as discussed in the previous section, this was not always made explicit and was instead inferred. For example, those participants that subscribed to a definition of smacking as legitimate parenting behaviour suggested that the use of smacking acted as a deterrent and thereby prevented further unwanted behaviour. They suggested that both the threat of smacking and a light smack could act as a warning, that if the behaviour were to be continued then further punishment may ensue. Additionally these participants agreed that smacking was justified in order to keep children safe and to protect them from imminent danger; as such, it was the action of a loving and caring responsible parent.

Smacking was seen to be justified as a response to 'very bad' behaviour. Incongruently two participants categorised smacking another child or smacking a parent as behaviour that warranted a smack. For example, Carla (M P) a young single parent recounted how she now felt about smacking saying that children were defenceless and therefore shouldn't be smacked by adults. However, towards the end of the interview, Carla went to explain that she did sometimes smack her five - year old daughter.

I do if she hits me – she's started doing that. Sometimes other children hit her at nursery. I think that I'll tell her she's to hit them back (Carla M P: 6).

Carla not only contradicts her initial assertions that she no longer uses smacking with her daughter on account of her vulnerability, but also suggests that she does not play out a parenting role that incorporates the idea of being a role model. Although as a listener and researcher I was keen not to adopt a 'health visiting role' during interviews, I did ask Carla 'what might happen if her daughter was the one that was caught in retaliation when at nursery. Carla decided that it might be best if she went to have a chat with the nursery teacher. Although there are a number of possible explanations for what appear to be contradictions in personal narratives, I remember thinking at the time of this interview, that this was simply an instance of a parent in the process of working things out, being in a state of transition; moving from the position of using smacking to one in which other more positive approaches could be learned and practiced. Carla's beliefs about the vulnerability of children were held in tension with her perceived need to provide a deterrent that would prevent similar episodes in the future.

In a recent email communication with Christensen (personal communication, 2009) I was asked if any of the autobiographical data collected in this study threw any light upon the paradox of the parent who loves and deeply cares for their child yet also inflicts pain by smacking. Participants that used smacking with their children were clear that they did not wish to cause long-term harm neither to cause any serious physical injury. Ailsa, a Western Isles health visitor who was also a parent summed this up as follows.

Just a sign that I'm trying to tell you something here, not to actually inflict hurt on a child (Ailsa I P HV: 3).

There are a number of possible explanations for this paradox that have been reported upon in other studies and that concur with the findings in this study (Belsky 1993; Belsky et al 2006; Brownlie and Anderson 2006; Sidebotham 2001; Taylor, Spenser and Baldwin 2000). These explanations are threefold; often the smack was reactive rather than a planned strategy, the result of feelings of frustration or stress and sometimes anger. Maggie, a health visitor from Fife who was also a grandparent spoke with some regret about her actions in the past when she was raising her own children within a different social milieu.

I do remember smacking her because I was angry and that was wrong – to smack to vent your own anger, but at that time it wasn't unusual to smack your kids (Maggie M G HV: 4).

However, for some participants, their use of smacking was related to understandings of what it was to be a good parent, and was in line with what they considered to be part of their obligation and responsibility to protect from harm and to teach normative moral behaviour. Julie a parent and Fife health visitor described how this was played out within her family. She described a situation when her son was very small and was intent on touching electrical sockets. Despite attempting to distract him, he continued to try to play with the sockets:

In the end it was like two bulls against each other. It was 'no, no you can't do that', a tap of the hand and 'no'. He was testing me all of the time, eventually I won (Julie M P HV: 5).

Julie went on to explain that now that her boys were teenagers she did not smack them, because they were physically bigger than her and because there was now no need; they had learned what the boundaries of good behaviour were; she felt that she could take them out knowing that they would behave according to her prescribed regulation. From Julie's perspective, this was an example of a successful parenting strategy in which her children were successfully socialised.

Thirdly, parents understanding of relationship with children seems to be a key determinant in the planned use of smacking. This is also a place where there were differences amongst those participants that regarded smacking as a form of violence compared to those who did not. Those parents that emphasised the need for the parent to be the one that is in control and that children should respect adults per se seem to be in agreement that using smacking with their children could serve to achieve that goal. Terms such as 'showing who's boss', 'being in control' and 'being the adult in the relationship' were used by some participants to illustrate this belief. In the following extract a health visitor from the Western Isles recounted a recent experience when at a case conference with a single father and his four-year-old daughter.

Granny looks after the child a lot at the weekends, and the child is the one that dictates; interestingly enough he said, 'I'm leaving it to her to decide where she wants to go this weekend'. I immediately wanted to say 'no, don't do that because you're the one who is in control of this situation, she's not in control of you' (Isabelle M P HV: 9).

Isabelle went on to explain that she thought that sometimes parents feared that if they took charge of a situation they risked losing the love of the child and as a consequence bestowed children with “far too much power” (Isabelle I P HV: 10).

This belief was reiterated by Cathie, another Western Isles health visitor who when comparing her own upbringing with the experience of children today, explained that she felt that parent and child relationships had changed over time in a negative sense, saying,

But you see then, that's lack of respect. The parent is the one who is meant to be in control (Cathie I HV: 8).

On the other hand, those participants that regarded smacking to be a form of violence instead conveyed their desire to have a relationship that was based upon mutual respect and did not use rhetoric that included emotive words such as ‘control’. This corresponds with previous discussion about recognition and facilitation of children’s agency. Laura, a Fife parent, aptly quoted from Roald Dahl’s children’s novel ‘Matilda’ as she explained how she wanted to have a different sort of relationship with her children compared to the relationship that she had experienced with her own parents.

That's [NVC] been hugely helpful- creating that middle space that's not right or wrong. I always think of Matilda when her dad says, ‘I’m right and you’re wrong, I’m big you’re little, I’m smart you’re stupid’. That’s it in a nutshell

(Laura M P: 7).

Underpinning parental behaviour was understandings of doing harm to children’s bodies. There was congruence amongst participants who believed smacking to be legitimate, that the practice was not harmful and that it did not

have any long-term negative effects upon children because the physical effects were short term.

However, those participants that agreed that smacking was a form of violence had a more holistic view of children's bodies that allowed them to think about possible emotional harm, relationship present and future. The way that participants positioned themselves in relation to ideas about control intersect with notions about children as agents within their social world. By this I do not mean that children were understood to be agents within the family in an individualistic kind of way, but there is sense within some of these narratives (particularly those of Laura, Ilyana and Hannah) of a relationship of interdependence between children and adults within the family. According to Mayall (2000), when children are asked about how they understand their position within the family, they describe a reciprocal relationship between themselves and adults. Mayall (2000) suggests that respect for this important idea of reciprocity, honours children with the right to the protection by their parents, while at the same time recognises that children are competent and effective contributors who can alter the conditions of their own childhoods. The importance of this understanding of childhood is that it moves children out of a position of subordination to adults and as a result 'children gain in stature' (Mayall 2000 p.248). By recognising reciprocity of relationship amongst children and adults the position of children as people and thereby their human rights (including freedom from physical punishment) as people, is strengthened.

What I have found striking in analysis of narratives so far, is how personal definitions of smacking have implications for something fundamental to human

existence, that of relationship. Meanings associated with smacking construct it as more than an aspect of parenting practice or part of a repertoire of parenting tools; it is indicative of how parents have constructed notions of relationship with children. Ways in which participants have constructed and re-constructed their understanding of relationship with children through processes of transition is considered in the following chapter. In the following section, how the language used by parents to describe smacking and other forms of corporal punishment contributes to conceptualising smacking is explored.

5:5 GOOD SMACKS AND WEE TAPS

As part of the structural analysis of the narrative data I was keen to explore the way that euphemisms for hitting children were used by participants to describe and define the nature of physical punishment. Additionally, I have sought to make comparisons with my findings about the use of language in the print media texts that I had examined in the earlier part of this study.

The following catalogue of terms includes those that were used by participants during their interviews in their reference to experience of corporal punishment either as recipients or as observers. Although I have described the terms as part of a lexicon of corporal punishment, some of the terms at first reading seem to indicate an abusive use of physical punishment rather than that permitted by current legislation in the UK. Presentation of the terms in the form of a list decontextualises them from participants' narrative accounts and prompts questions about the use of language to convey meaning.

Table Five

Catalogue of Euphemisms and Phrases for Corporal Punishment

A good hiding	A good wrap around the ear / clip round the ear.
A quick short sharp one.	Assault
Batter	Biff
Bollocking	Clout
Grab	Hammered
Hit / Physically hit	'I'm gonna bust you'
Lashing out	Laying into
Lift your hand / Raise your hand	Physical discipline
Put over the knee	Red hot bottom.
Scalped /Skite/ Skiped / skelped	Slap
Smack / A light smack / A wee smack A smacking / A good smack	Spank
Strike	Tap / Wee tap
Thrashing	Thump
Whack	Wallop

It appears from the autobiographical accounts of participants' experiences, that there is a rich lexicon of nuanced words that have been used to describe corporal punishment. Accompanying adjectives such as 'the good smack' or the 'wee tap' help to signify the meaning of the action by suggesting something of its intensity and purpose. The 'good' smack was not good because it was less painful, instead it implies that the smack was thorough, and was indeed painful. May be the use of the term 'good' in this context subconsciously refers to beliefs about 'the good parent', whose role it is to teach the child right from wrong and to instil a moral code for behaviour. On the other hand, within the context of these narratives, the 'wee' tap or 'wee' smack seems to indicate that infliction of pain and punishment was not the intention, but rather to draw a child's attention to an unsafe behaviour such as touching electric sockets, or to warning to convey to the child that the behaviour is undesirable.

Other terms, for example, onomatopoetic words such as 'biff' and 'whack' and other phrases such as 'wrap around the ear' and 'I'm gonna bust you' have parallels with their usage in well known comics such as 'The Beano' and serve to make what is a potentially serious matter into something that is quite culturally acceptable.

By turning corporal punishment into a subject of comedy, their murkier overtones are masked (McCloud 1994).

It is argued by semioticians that this kind of linguistic mechanism can influence change in commonly held societal attitudes, such as the social construction and reconstruction of definitions about violence. Gledhill (1997) described the

'circular' relationship between realism, cultural verisimilitude and generic verisimilitude in relation to the role of fiction in everyday life. For example, events such as corporal punishment, in media form such as the comic, echo real life. This comic representation of corporal punishment is made possible according to Neale (1990) because the fictional world of the comic genre operates within a given set of rules that we recognise (generic verisimilitude). It is this that gives the comic genre licence to portray corporal punishment in a way that both conforms to cultural verisimilitude, i.e. what the dominant culture believes to be the case (that it is acceptable for parents and teachers to use corporal punishment) while at the same time in a larger than life sense, this comic narrative goes beyond what is real, or what is accepted to be real. In using the onomatopoeic language described above, it is possible that participants in this study are not saying what they actually do, or what they actually believe in, but instead have adopted the rhetoric of popular culture. This was apparent when the term 'batter' was recontextualised within the participant's narrative. It seemed clear that what was being referred to was not considered abusive by the participant, but instead might be considered as an example of the relationship between realism, cultural and generic verisimilitude: the term was used in the comic book 'larger than life' sense rather than literally. Participants were able to use a wide range of euphemisms for corporal punishment in their narrative accounts because they perceived we had a shared understanding of their meaning. On the other hand, the use of euphemisms for corporal punishment may serve to trivialise the act of smacking.

According to Gledhill (1997) cultural verisimilitude evolves over time according to current social discourse, and social change. The comic genre has been forced to change the way corporal punishment is represented within its stories. A case in point is regarding the use of the slipper by Dennis the Menace's granny in 'The Beano'. This was stopped in 1990 at a time in the UK when corporal punishment by parents was being debated publicly in the television, radio and print media, and when social attitudes about smacking were changing. In a similar way, when smacking was understood by participants to be an act of violence such euphemisms were less likely to be employed and instead terms such as bullying, assault and hitting were used. This represents a huge cultural shift in the way that both smacking and notions of childhood are being socially reconstructed in a way that takes into account children's rights.

du Gay et al (1997) explained that such circuits of communication illustrate the way that cultural products such as newspapers or comics, are appropriated and produced in a way that is both dynamic and interlinked. Circuits of communication such as that described by Gledhill and du Gay are said not only to represent society but they are also concerned with regulation and identity. In the light of this current study this can be applied to the way that print media texts can regulate what is understood about corporal punishment and also in some way may contribute to parents understanding of their role and subsequently how they see themselves: identity as parents.

Prior (2003) also concurs that documents are not inert, they can be operated upon by people and they can also influence human action. Prior refers to

documents as social agents in social processes in the same way that humans act as social agents:

Documents enter into episodes of social interaction in a dual manner...as receptacles of content and as functioning agents in their own right. There is a sense in which they form a foundation upon which social actions are built (Prior 2003).

It was when parents were remembering the past and their own experiences of being physically punished that they used more emotive language. It was in the accounts of the past that terms such as 'thrashing' or getting a 'whack around the ear' were used. Monica (M P HV) recalled two separate situations when at age nine or ten years, her father and mother punished her:

My dad went ballistic, I ran through to the bedroom, and he had his belt and he just whacked me, and I was sort of cowering between the wall and the bunk beds and I remember getting absolutely whacked with the belt, arms and all the way down (Monica M P HV: 1)

My mum would smack your thighs or whack you with a slipper. If we misbehaved at someone's house it would be, behind the sofa, pants down and whack with a slipper. I'd forgotten about that – the mortification of it, and you don't know any better. Children just accept it (Monica M P HV: 7)

However, when parents described using physical punishment with their own young children, they tended to talk about using 'light smacks' or 'taps'. Brownlie (2006) suggests a number of possible explanations for similar findings in a survey commissioned by The Scottish Executive that was conducted with parents in Scotland and published in 2002. Brownlie explained that the 'strongly

embodied' accounts of having been disciplined as children only emerge when adults situate themselves as punished children rather than punishing adults' (Brownlie 2006, paragraph 4:13). These findings, like those presented previously in this thesis, could reflect the way that parents rationalise their practice as they bring it into line with what is currently considered to be acceptable. Some participants stated that they did not know anyone amongst their peers that smacked their children these days, and those participants that did know parents that used physical punishment indicated their concern.

In a sense then, the use of terms such as 'biff' and 'whack' have hung on in the descriptive language related to corporal punishment, despite it's relegation in popular culture (such as within comics), in recent times. The circularity described by Gledhill (1997) and du Gay et al (1997) is a more helpful explanation of the relationship between social change, media representation and public opinion, compared to a more linear one that simply suggests that the media influences public opinion, or conversely that the media reflects public opinion; it is more of a dialogical, interactive sort of relationship that exists amongst various media genre and the public, with one feeding into the other.

Explanations for the strongly embodied accounts offered by parents about their childhood memories of corporal punishment intersect with the idea of the subjectively experienced body of the recipient of corporal punishment, an insider view, compared with the objective or outsider view of the body in pain, both physical or emotional (Christensen 2009, personal communication).

Monica's (M P HV) belief that, "children just accept it", could help to explain the 'outsider' view. If young children do just accept punishment and don't always articulate their feelings about their experience of smacking, then adults may interpret this as somehow less significant than the experience of an older child or adult. However, the view that "*children just accept it*", is not born out by the findings of the study, 'It hurts you inside' (Willow and Hyder, 1998, see Literature Review). Here children clearly articulated how they felt when their parents smacked them.

This explanation runs parallel to participants' beliefs about what it is to be a child. Very young children were viewed by some participants to be pre-rational and understood to be somehow immune to feelings of humiliation or emotional pain and unlikely to suffer lasting damage, unlike older, 'nearing completion' children. This is captured in the following quotation that followed a discussion about the role of the state and current legislation about smacking:

Certainly in this day and age I think that children need to be protected...but there needs to be some form of discipline, y' know: a smack at this age, three to seven, is just giving them a sense of what's right and what's wrong. Cos it's hard for them to comprehend words if you like, at that age. After that, well, you can't put a fourteen-year-old girl or boy over your knee

(Gwen M G: 6).

This seems to be a licence or justification to use mild physical punishment with young children, the short sharp smack; the physical body heals quickly and lasting harm thought to be unlikely. On the other hand, the 'almost complete child' is capable of having feelings and understanding about what it is to be

physically punished and therefore should not be physically punished as the emotional effects of this may be long standing.

The following quotations are taken from two different participants' narratives in which memories of being smacked as older children were recounted; Janice (MG) as a teenager, and Rita (M P HV) aged around nine or ten.

He used to stand up very quickly and whack me across the face with the back of his hand, and it used to hurt, but it wasn't the physical hurt that I hated, it was so humiliating (Janice M G: 1).

I do remember being smacked by my aunt, and I was shocked, devastated, because by that time my parents didn't smack at that age (Rita M P HV: 1).

Similar arguments were presented in initial proposals for an age related ban on corporal punishment in Scotland. However, these were rejected since there was no consensus on what age or stage in development children were able to understand ideas about guilt and punishment (Justice 2 Committee 2002).

5:6 SUMMARY

Structural analysis of participants' narratives has shed light upon processes that allowed participants to construct their narrative accounts. Attention was paid to how participants used language in the construction of their narratives to convey content and in the way that participants and researcher were engaged in the social processes of conversation, with each, as the interview progressed, taking stock of the other's position; the interviewer prompting where elaboration of

events was required for clarification or where participants definitions of smacking were voiced implicitly rather than explicitly, provision of contextual historical, cultural and geographical information when this was perceived to be helpful by the participant. In this way, the interviews moved from being simply a description of events or experience, to what Holstein and Gubrium (1995) termed a co-constructed product.

The value of episodic interviewing as a form of narrative interviewing became apparent as I became more aware of the way in which my infrequent requests for the participant to illustrate the narrative with a significant event or situation, allowed the story to be ordered in a way that was acceptable to the participant. This allowed more sensitive stories to be included when the participant felt ready, in their own time. I suspect stories such as Janice's (M G) account of a situation when she dug her fingernails into the hand of her son (as described previously on p.166), may well have been missed if a more structured form of interviewing that relied upon my agenda rather than the participant's agenda had been utilised.

Narrative accounts were presented chronologically. The way that participants presented accounts of their experience of smacking over the life course paved the way for exploring different aspects of *transition* in following chapter. I moved from interrogating the data to discover definitions of smacking, to asking questions about how personal definitions of smacking were developed and how these definitions were interpreted intergenerationally and in the practice of being a parent or health visitor. This is an example of a way in which constructs

gleaned from one phase of analysis, fed into the next. Participants' definitions of smacking demonstrated that there was both convergence and divergence with print media representation of smacking. Print media definitions of smacking had changed between 1989 and 2004, with early definitions supporting the use of smacking as an effective discipline strategy and more recent accounts challenged the legitimacy of smacking as an infringement of children's human rights. This cultural transition was mirrored in individual participants narratives at intergenerational and intragenerational levels amongst the majority of mainland participants, however, most Island participants did not reiterate this. Island health visitors were more likely than mainland participants to define smacking as a justifiable parenting practice. Discussion of this aspect of the findings is taken up again in the following chapter in relation to participants' experience of transition.

Deeply entrenched views about long term consequences for young people and society, the threat of 'yob culture', that were found in early and more recent newspaper reports were also conveyed by a minority of participants and contributed to their definition of smacking as a necessary part of parental discipline strategy. Where participants defined smacking as legitimate rather than as a violent act of assault, this intersected with ideas about children's ages and the zoning of children's bodies.

As in the print media accounts previously described, a wide range of euphemisms for hitting that were used by participants served to trivialise the act of smacking. In contrast when smacking was understood to be an act of

violence such euphemisms were less likely to be employed and instead terms such as bullying, assault and hitting were used.

Findings from structural analysis cannot be regarded as a discreet entity. Instead they act as building blocks for the following stage of analysis, analysis of thematic content. Alone, they provide an incomplete interpretation of what was conveyed in participants' narrative accounts. Although structural analysis has allowed me to explore how the narratives were constructed, language used to convey definitions of smacking and to identify the beginnings of patterns across the narratives: it has not enabled me to discover how these definitions of what constitutes smacking translate into the experience of being a parent or health visitor.

Completion of this stage in the analysis and interpretation of structural aspects of the narratives, prompted me to consider in the next stage of analysis, how the different ways that participants understood smacking was translated in the every day experience of being a parent; how this might be explained in relation to participants experience of smacking during the lifecourse and how definitions of smacking and ideas about parent and child relationship might intersect. In the following chapter, narrative threads found within the data, which help to answer these questions are discussed. Concepts of *transition* were used as an *apriori* framework to help to shed light upon these issues. This key theme is explored across all participants' narratives. This focus upon transition was prompted by the findings discussed so far: changing print media discourse about parents' use of smacking together with participants' different definitions of smacking

seem to suggest a relationship between societal discourse, changing culture and the response found within individual biographical stories.

CHAPTER SIX

THEMATIC CONTENT OF NARRATIVES

6:1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an interpretation of the narrative interviews that was developed through a process of thematic analysis of content. By this I mean the detailed search across all of the interview data for different narrative threads that when grouped together make up storied themes, rather than attending to form (structure) as in the previous stage of analysis (Polkinghorne 1988; Stanley 2008).

Through a complex process of reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews stanza by stanza, iteratively going between the findings, literature and background reading; interpreting the findings in the light of the literature allowed discovery of key narrative threads and what Stanley (2008) terms, 'a meta narrative'; the interpretational overview that is finally presented.

In the previous chapter the main focus was upon the structure of the narratives. Two distinct ways of understanding the nature of smacking were identified; it was an act of violence or alternatively it was a legitimate or appropriate form of parental discipline. These positions were extrapolated from definitions of smacking found within each narrative. The narrative types found within the data that are discussed in this chapter build upon the findings that are presented in

the previous chapters and help to explain how some participants moved from one position to another through different experiences of transition.

Embedded in the research question is the notion of change over time, both for individuals and for wider society. Discussion of some of the structural changes within society that relate to the use of corporal punishment were included in chapter one, as a history line. This provides the social context of each individual's narrative. What seem to be more subtle and harder to tease out are ideas about the personal: changing values and behaviour, and how this is experienced within the context of a changing society. It was with this idea of change over time used as an apriori code (Barbour 2008), that I began to question the data, noting any common narrative threads that ran across all of the data, which subsequently allowed the formulation of main themes or narrative threads. Prior to describing the thematic content of narratives, in the following section, I have included a brief introduction to the notion of transition and how it has been used as a framework for discovering the thematic content of participant's narratives within the current doctoral study.

6:2 TRANSITION

The term *transition* has been used widely within the health and social science literature according to Kralik et al (2006). There is agreement in this literature that people undergo transition when they need to adapt to new situations or circumstances in order to incorporate this change into the way they live their lives (Frank 1995; Frank 2002; Thomas-MacLean 2003; and Bradway and Barg 2006).

Bridges 2004 and Kralik (2006) suggest that transition, rather being the process of change, involves people's responses to change over time: it is the psychological process that involves adaptation to change and the reconstruction of self- identity. A definition of transition adopted widely by researchers in relation to transition through illness, that is pertinent to this study is provided by Chick and Meleis (1986).

[Transition] is a passage from one life phase, condition, or status to another...transition refers to both the process and the outcome of complex person-environment interactions. It may involve more than one person and is embedded in the context and the situation (Chick and Meleis. 1986 p239)

This definition suggests that individual experience of transition should be seen within a socio-ecological context. The complexity that is referred to in this definition is borne out by Stanley (2008) in her narrative inquiry that was conducted with women who had experienced the Boer War and concentration camps. In her study, women's individual narratives were set within the broader context of the transitions that took place with the rise in proto-nationalism in South Africa. Such complexity, that involves the need to take cognisance of the individuals' own personal context within which their story is embedded, as well as the wider social context of change within family life, is a feature of the findings presented in this chapter too.

The findings presented in this chapter describe different ways in which transition had been, and is being experienced by the study participants.

Three related themes about transition run through all of the narratives:

1. The first theme builds upon the idea of chronology over the lifecourse as discussed in the previous chapter. Each participant in their current role as parent, grandparent or as health visitor, recounted memories located in childhood and used them to convey their understandings of smacking and wider issues about the social position of children. This first theme is located within the concept of developmental transition that takes account of adaptation to new socially scripted roles.
2. The second theme moves away from childhood experience to experience as a parent. Though part of developmental transition, the focus within this theme is upon response to change in personal philosophy about the nature of the parent-child relationship through different experiences of transition: evolution, triggers, turning points and preservation.
3. The final theme is one that is threaded throughout this doctoral thesis, that of the relationship of individuals with structural change within society and new parameters for culturally defined norms and values about parenting and the use of physical punishment on children.

In the following sections these are discussed in detail and illustrated with examples from the narratives.

6:3 DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITION: BEING A CHILD

In accordance with Schumacher and Meleis (1994) I have used the term 'developmental transition' here to describe those transitions related to participants' experiences of changes that took place over the life course, moving from being a child to caring for a child as a parent, and /or as a professional carer or health visitor. These key periods in the life course, recounted in the narrated biographies form the basis of the storied themes and narrative threads that were identified through thematic content analysis as explained in the study methodology (Chapter Three).

Participants' biographical stories about being a child and being a parent and for some, being a health visitor were woven in such a way that the different threads were often put to one side and picked up again; each narrator constantly moved between 'being a child' [sic] and being a parent or practitioner as they compared one experience with the other, moving temporally between the present and the past.

Included within this first theme were all participants' stories of memories of past experience of being a child and what it was like to grow up within the context of their own family.

These biographies of childhoods¹ included recollections of:

- Descriptions of family life.
- Experience of different forms of punishment in the home and at school.
- Relationship with parents

¹ I use the term childhoods here rather than the childhood singular to emphasis that individual experience of a childhood is both relational and contextual (James and Prout (1997).

- Feelings experienced as children in response to parental use of punishment.

These narrative threads suggested two main descriptions of childhood in two storied themes, memories of *conflict* and threads that presented an idea of an *idyllic* childhood. Together these threads offer insights into personal interpretations about the nature of childhood. Although this implies experience was polarised, some participants described their childhood as ordinary, but subsequently went on to recount situations of conflict and at other times elements of an idyllic childhood. My role then, as listener and interpreter was to seek out the extraordinary in what had been perceived as an ordinary childhood.

Although recounting experiences of family life such as meal time rituals and play activities may not initially appear to be relevant to the research topic, these ordinary everyday events provide a social context for the individual's experience of corporal punishment and the meaning each participant ascribed to it both in the past and at the present.

6:3:1 The Idyllic Childhood

A number of threads were woven within narrative accounts of idyllic childhoods. Participants recounted a happy childhood spent with loving parents. One participant (Cathie I P HV: 2) counted herself as 'privileged' and others described activities such as music and dancing lessons and happy family holidays by way of example (Carol I P HV: 1).

Freedom

A recurring idea within the idyllic childhood narrative thread was about the experience of being free: freedom to play out of doors and to be able to roam the countryside. This was a particular characteristic of an island childhood, but also featured in the stories of the childhood of the past on the Scottish mainland, and was not as might be envisaged, limited to the stories of older participants as the following quotation from a younger participant indicates:

We were half the days playing around the croft; we had a lot of freedom, a huge amount of freedom. We would go over the hills and nobody ever told us not to be doing that, or not to be climbing trees, or that, ...we made our own games, We didn't have a lot of toys (Maureen I P HV: 1).

Cathie, another islander health visitor and parent, compared her experience as a child with the experience of children today:

We had tremendous freedom...to go out and explore the countryside. ...I remember my brother going camping up the hills. Children don't do that sort of thing now (Cathie I P HV: 2).

Another island participant, Doreen (I P HV), presented a paradoxical account of childhood freedom which was at the same time set within the context of the regulation of the Sabbath; a day each week when there was no freedom to play. Instead children were required to abide by the regulations that governed the keeping of the Sabbath:

Childhood was a time of freedom, to play and to explore, a happy childhood...The Sabbath was a day when you did nothing; until recently the swings in the play park were tied (Doreen I P HV: 1).

These stories of childhood freedom recounted by the islanders were relational, measured against the perceived experience of islander children today, and also as a comparison to the experience of children living on the mainland. These stories pointed to a time when children were perceived to be safe when away from the confines of the home, at a time when communities shared responsibility for child rearing. This is a theme taken up by Edith, a mainland grandparent in her seventies:

And living in a small village, all the adults took responsibility for all the children. It was probably an easy upbringing that I had. During the war there was very little traffic in our area and we just roamed the countryside, through woods, on bikes. We'd no problems (Edith M G: 2).

Here, Edith compared her experience of freedom not only with that of children today, but also within the context of changes brought about in the environment that were due to wartime circumstances.

The previous examples from the narrative accounts, demonstrate the way that situations about the experience of freedom as a child to play were recounted, when participants told their own story in relation to three different dimensions, geography, time and social context. These stories of idyllic childhoods in which memories of freedom to play away from home were emphasised, intersected recounted with stories that focused upon traditional family values of children knowing the boundaries for good behaviour that had been set for them by adults. Where children did not obey these boundaries for behaviour then, smacking was justified. Freedom within the context of the childhoods conveyed

by some participants, sits in an uncomfortable and paradoxical position when considered in relation to children's rights and relationship amongst adult caregivers and children. Therefore, freedom could be interpreted as a misnomer in such contexts.

Traditional family values

A further leitmotif within this *idyllic childhood* narrative thread was that of having traditional family values, which included knowing the boundaries for behaviour. Again, these stories were recounted in a way that conveyed to me, the listener, an understanding that these values belong to a childhood in the past and not always the childhoods of the present.

For example, Edith, having described the freedoms of her childhood went on to say, this was made possible because she and her peers were aware of the boundaries for behaviour that had been set by their parents, and emphasised this point with reference to her own style of parenting:

I think that it was easier (to be given freedom) because we knew what was acceptable and what wasn't. I think that's the biggest difference. I don't think that sometimes children realise or parents realise that they need guidelines, definite guidelines. We used to try to bring our two up, this may be permissible in other peoples' houses but in our house these are the rules and you stick to them'. Again my children were brought up on the farm and they had a lot of freedom (Edith M G: 2).

Mhairi reiterated this theme in her description of a time when her family moved from the Western Isles to Glasgow in the 1950s. She compared her family's values with those of her new classroom peers:

It was highlighted to me at a young age that there was a difference between me and the other children, you know, in my class, because of the values and traditions that came from here [Western Isles]. I was expected to be well mannered and to speak to adults when they spoke to me, whereas going to a place like Glasgow they didn't follow those rules; they spoke when they felt like it, and things like that. I wouldn't say that my family life was terribly strict; it was maybe intuitive boundaries, that you didn't go past (Mhairi I P HV: 1).

Unlike Edith, Mhairi later described how she had modified her own style of parenting, by being "a bit more relaxed" with her own children, saying that although she believed children needed to have clear boundaries for behaviour and a consistent approach should be used by parents, her own children were allowed to make more choices, at meal times for instance. Mhairi suggested that this was not only to do with changing times, changing expectations of adult and child relationships, but because when she was a child, 'money was scarce' and preparation of meals was much more time consuming.

Similarly two mothers from the Scottish mainland Jill and Judy also emphasised that this 'knowing the boundaries' was a feature of their childhood experience:

One of the good things about my childhood was that we had limits; we had a bedtime, we were brought up to know what we did in our family and we did it (Jill M P: 3).

I wasn't a bad child; I didn't need an awful lot of discipline. That's the way I perceive it. You knew your boundaries (Judy M P HV: 2).

These stories of 'idyllic' childhoods paint a picture of a time when according to these participants, being a child meant fulfilling a particular role that was ascribed exclusively to children. A role in which children were allowed by adults to have little agency, and in which they passively abided by family and societal rules, while at the same time, the rewards were freedom to do 'children's activities' such as exploring the countryside. These ideas were captured in Mhairi's narrative in her comment,

I was probably a child for longer than what my own children were
(Mhairi I P HV: 1).

6:3:2 Conflict in Childhood

Within the narrative threads that were about childhood experience, some participants talked about a number of different issues that seemed to indicate conflict. By this I mean the conflict that seemed to exist for the participant, between what they perceived to be the normative idea of what it was to be a child and actual experience, as well as those recollections of the experience of harsh physical punishment. These issues included:

- Recollections of episodes that were about physical punishment experienced first hand, or observation of the punishment of a sibling.
- Recollections of feelings and emotions that were perceived to constitute a negative self-identity.
- Recollections of disagreement between parents about the use of corporal punishment.
- Descriptions of roles and relationships in conflict.
- Accounts of stressors such as divorce and separation of parents.

These issues when considered together have been presented by participants as part of their experience of physical punishment. In the following section these are described in greater detail with illustrative examples from participants' narratives.

Experience of physical punishment

Unsurprisingly, given the historical and social context of corporal punishment of children in the UK, of the thirty-five participants, only six had no recollection of having received any kind of physical punishment from their parents.

Although some national and international organisations such as the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN), the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), and Children are Unbeatable! Alliance (CAU) generally consider all physical punishment of children to be wrong and consequently define smacking as an act of violence and therefore an example of conflict; I have instead been guided by participants' own perceptions of what the use of physical punishment has meant to them.

The way in which participants situated themselves in their recollections as children who had experienced an idyllic childhood or who had experienced conflict in their childhood seemed to be important in influencing their perceptions of the way that their parents used corporal punishment with them. It is for this reason that not all stories that recounted experience of corporal punishment in childhood are grouped within what I have called the *conflict* narrative thread. Acceptance of the social norms of the day, that included

parental use of physical punishment may have in part allowed a 'smacked childhood' to also be experienced as idyllic.

The following quotations are some participants' childhood recollections that describe disagreement amongst parents about the use of corporal punishment.

I think that my parents were in conflict about the position of discipline...I can remember hearing an enormous row, and they probably rowed quite a lot but we didn't hear much of it, but the row I heard was to do with my father hitting my brother who was asthmatic...I remember her [mother] saying 'you hit my child again and I'll never forgive you', she really was like a dragon, a lioness (Janice M G: 1).

Janice went on to explain that she had only one recollection of her mother using smacking; this was with her brother, in what was described as an extreme situation. Janice explained that as a result of her father's use of physical punishment she had little respect for him, and on the occasions she vocalised this, her father would 'whack' her across the face with the back of his hand. Janice finished this small story saying, it wasn't the physical hurt that she hated, but the humiliation she felt. Both Janice (M G) and Ilyana (M P) recognised the mediatory role taken on by their mothers:

I think that he would have beaten us all a lot more if my mother hadn't taken the position that she did (Janice MG: 1).

Well I think that there was a big difference between the way my father disciplined us, and my mother. My father would have been a lot more physical and louder and shouting...my mum was the one that I knew I could

run to if I needed comforting. My dad used to discipline, my older sister especially. I remember him hitting her, which wasn't very nice to watch

(Ilyana M P: 1).

Ilyana later described a specific situation in which her father used physical punishment in a way that way to colour their relationship in the longer term:

The one that I remember most vividly, well, he used to hit my oldest sister, when she was growing up and meeting boys. My father was so worried that she would end up pregnant, that he would go to huge lengths to tell her what's going to happen if she gets pregnant. He would take off his belt and hit her if he found out that she had been out with boys from the village

(Ilyana M P: 2).

Fathers were not always remembered by participants as the parent most likely to mete out the harshest forms of punishment, with some suggesting that disciplining was usually left to the mother. The most usual reason for this being that the father was out at work all day and the mother was at home with the children:

My mum probably did most of the disciplining because she was the one that was there all the time. My dad worked long hours especially at lambing time and harvest times (Alison M G HV: 1).

Dad didn't get too much involved in the day to day running of the household. Discipline and everything was very much sort of left to my mum, but I would say that there was, 'just wait till your father gets home – wait till he hears about this'. There was a bit of that as well, though I don't ever remember myself being smacked (Rita M P HV: 1).

My mum was the boss. My father worked shifts and he also played golf; that strange man at the end of the table – oh! It's my father

(Julie M P HV: 1).

However, in the following two examples, the participants suggest that proximity was not the key factor, rather, their fathers preferred not to use physical punishment:

My mother was the disciplinarian in the family. She was very strict. ...On occasions that we went 'beyond the pale' she would have my father smack us, which he hated doing, you could tell he hated it. She wouldn't do it herself; she felt that it was his place to enforce discipline. One time, he took me upstairs and put me over his knee and got his slipper out – and I laughed, I don't know where it came from, but I laughed and dad said, 'this is useless'. That was the last time that he ever hit me (Joni M P: 2).

The one thing that I do recall is that my mother did use physical chastisement, but my father never did. It wasn't a big deal. I can't remember it bothering me, until maybe when I was a teenager. I can remember one time when she threw a saucer at me and actually cut my head, which on reflection was probably because I was attention seeking... and she didn't handle it very well...As I got older, the person that I had the best relationship with was my father (Ailsa I P HV: 1).

Ailsa's little throwaway line, "...which on reflection was probably because I was attention seeking", I think speaks volumes about evident tension. As a parent and also as a health visitor she is able to empathise with or to understand the feeling of not always being able to cope with an 'attention seeking child', while at the same time understanding this sort of parental behaviour can result in non accidental injury. In this narrative the event is played down as Ailsa takes responsibility for the punishment but at the same time she remembered that this event 'bothered her' as a teenager. Ailsa hinted that it was the way her mother had used physical chastisement that had resulted in a poorer relationship with

her mother than with her father. This acceptance of the punishment may on one hand reflect her ability to empathise with her mother, but instead may also reflect the social positioning of children in the past, when it was considered to be acceptable to physically punish children.

In the following quotation, Lesley, a Fife health visitor who was also a parent, described her past experience of conflict. She described how although only around ten years old she was given the responsibility of looking after her younger sister on a regular basis. This level of accountability for her sister's actions was perceived by Lesley to be beyond what should be expected for her age:

I was probably more responsible for her than I should have been to be quite honest. I would be about ten or eleven; I looked after her after school and at weekends. I remember thinking, 'this is an awful lot of responsibility', because she was quite difficult. If anything happened, I was responsible. If a window was broken, and I was with her, then I was responsible even though she did it. I found that quite difficult y'know, looking back (Lesley M P HV: 1).

Later in Lesley's narrative she described a further aspect of tension. While on one hand she was expected to be responsible for her young sister, as an older teenager of seventeen and studying at college, she was not afforded the privileges of adulthood: she was expected to be home at a time stipulated by her parents. Lesley recalled an instance when she returned home after the 'curfew' time and was duly 'hit around the ears by her father'. On reflection, Lesley put this inconsistency down to their inexperience as parents, saying that

they were less likely in later years to respond to her sister in the same punitive way.

The following two quotations are examples of two different sources of stress for both the parents and children that were involved. In both of these quotations there is a sense of conflict in terms of the relationship with the parent that was desired by the child and the actual experience due to factors outside the child's control:

Well, my parents divorced or split up when I was six, and I think that was one of the foundation events of my childhood: Very messy, one of the first great wave of the 70s divorces. They didn't know what was happening and we didn't know what was happening and they were very distressed...the general tenure was not a happy family, a lot of fighting and a lot of shouting (Hannah M P: 1).

As an adult looking back upon this experience, Hannah, a mainland parent, recognised that in part, some of the angst experienced by the family was related to the way in which divorce was perceived in the early 70s within Scottish society; her parents were not only caught up in their own distress, they were also contending with societal stigma and societal expectations of marriage.

Lily, a mainland grandparent, situated her narrative by talking about what was for her, the context against which her childhood was experienced:

My sister and I never got on very well, but we had a housekeeper, who was the balancing influence in our lives because for about three or four months of the year Mum was in hospital, and for another two months of the year

she would be very unstable. I realise all that just now of course, but at the time we didn't know what was wrong. Apparently there was a child who died between me and my brother. My Mum was put on Valium, and I reckon that's what caused it all. If she hadn't been kept on Valium she would probably have been alright (Lily M G: 1).

When recounting these *conflict* stories, participants conveyed a sense of the construction of their identity as children by describing how they felt in response to specific events. Childhood memories of humiliation and disapproval have resonance with children's responses, as evidenced in Willow and Hyder's study, 'It hurts You Inside (1998, see Literature Review). Participants were more likely to remember feelings of humiliation than actual physical pain. This finding lends support to a view that smacking, even when no physical damage is done, may take its toll emotionally in the longer term, in some circumstances and for some children. The following paragraph lists some emotions experienced by some participants as children. Although paraphrased, the terms listed are those used by narrators themselves.

'Feeling out of control' when smacked by a parent (Laura M P: 3).

Lesley (M P HV: 11) described how her husband as a boy had also experienced this sense of feeling out of control. For both Laura and Lesley and her husband, this strong feeling of loss of control over self when experiencing being smacked was offered as one of the reasons why they had chosen not to use physical punishment with their own children.

Humiliation was described by Lesley (M P: 10), Janice (M G: 1) and Monica (M P HV: 7) following in all three instances physical punishment by their fathers.

Alongside humiliation, Lesley described the 'anger' that she felt for her father (10), and Janice (1) explained how this had culminated in a 'lack of respect' for her father.

Laura's (M P: 1) memories were of 'criticism and negativity' from her parents. Jane (M G: 9) remembered her parents' 'quiet disapproval'. Julie (M P HV: 4) recalled 'Being made to feel guilty'.

Finally, Joni (M P) in the following quotation described her relationship with her adoptive mother:

"My experience of a nurturing relationship was pretty much not there"
(Joni: 2).

She later went on to sum up her childhood saying:

But that whole experience of childhood, especially boarding school, I came out with no sense of who I was (Joni M P: 3).

In presenting these stories of conflict, not all participants seemed to have internalised these feelings of conflict experienced in childhood and to have constructed a negative self-identity of the sort that was described by Joni.

In the telling of these conflict narratives, participants have constructed an identity of a childhood self that is contextualised within social mores of the past and that is in contrast to those of the present; it is relational in terms of perception of their relationship with their parents and the different sort of

relationship that they sought to achieve with their own children. For these participants one aspect of being a good parent was to foster mutual respect and a positive identity of self amongst children. What this meant in practice for some participants is explored in greater depth in the following section and again in the following chapter within the exemplar narratives of Joni, Hannah and Laura.

Participants used their stories of childhood to make connections with their experience and aspirations as parents; some preserved or maintained continuity of experience intergenerationally, while others actively sought change. During the 'interviews' conducted for this study, participants re-presented their biographies as the 'being parent' as well as the 'being child', distinguished only by the time (though possibly re-presented a number of times over the biographical life course) between situation and recall. In one sense the 'being parent' is the 'being child past'. One identity is not completely subsumed by another as the child of the past becomes the parent of today, rather these personal identities co-exist for the duration of a life: maybe to use an analogy from photography, it's simply 'depth of field' that alters in the telling of a life story. Just as children can be said to hold a dual identity, the being child and the future adult, parents also seem to hold dual identity, the being parent and the child past, with one identity coming to the foreground at different places within the narrative as each participant constantly moved between recounting their experiences as a child and their experiences as a parent. It is clear that participants' constructions of smacking intersect with beliefs about the nature of childhood and child and parent identities that are both temporal and embodied

These stories of childhood, a starting place for participants telling of a life, also provided a starting place for my exploration across these narratives of participants' response to change during their own life course and in their experience of a changing society. The key question I wanted to gain further insights into was: how did these changes take place?

Some light is shed upon this in the following section where the second main theme is explored; the response to social change in terms of personal philosophy about the sort of relationship parents might have with their children and how this may influence attitudes towards smacking and contribute towards moral self identity.

6:4 BEING A PARENT: EVOLUTION, TRIGGERS TURNING POINTS AND PRESERVATION

This second area of transition is about the way in which participants described the diverse influences upon their working philosophy of relationship, between themselves as a parent and their children. In other words, how they saw themselves as parents and also the parent they wanted to be. Although parents understood that the main focus of this study was about their understanding of use of corporal punishment, participants talked more broadly about the nature of their relationship with their children, often comparing it with the relationship that they felt they had experienced themselves with their parents.

Four narrative threads within this theme were identified through listening to the interview recordings and by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. Particular attention was paid to recollections of specific events that suggested response to change and any semantic aspects of knowledge that shed light upon factors participants perceived to be influential.

I have labelled these descriptive threads, *triggers*, *turning points*, *evolution and preservation*. Although the terms evolution, triggers and turning points can be found in the transition literature (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich 2009), these were terms that were used by participants themselves. Differences between these narrative threads are subtle, and relate to the diverse ways in which participants described any change in their attitudes and behaviours about using corporal punishment with their children.

Since transition is not change 'per se' but is a personal response to external or social change (Kralik 2006), narratives that suggest continuity over time have been included since this is also part of individuals' response to a changing society and have thus been labelled as preservation stories.

This idea of triggers and turning points in peoples' lives is aptly captured in the analogy used in the book title, 'Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition', (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich. Eds. 2001). Schultz (in McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich. 2001), described *triggers* as those events that have influenced a personal turning point. These were the events leading up to 'a turn in the road'.

These four narrative threads form a typology that help to shed light upon the broad question, how have people responded to cultural change within society? Or more specifically, what are the connections between individuals' own experience of transition in relation to parenting, and that of cultural and structural change, such as legal processes. In making these distinctions between triggers, turning points, evolution and preservation I have attempted to present participants' responses to change in a way that is reflected in the narratives; the participants' own interpretation of their response to change.

The historical sociologist Charles Tilly (1984) proposed that often within narrative inquiry, individual narratives or small-scale stories are considered at the expense of what he termed 'large processes and big structures' (p1) that bring about change in society. He stressed the importance of recognising

individual narratives are part of the movement of collective change and that individual narratives and large-scale social processes are interlinked. With this in mind, links between the personal narratives recounted by participants in this study and larger social processes can be interpreted as dialogical and ecological processes; social processes have influenced attitudes and behaviour about the use of smacking and at the same time some participants have sought to influence social change.

6:4:1 Triggers

The '*trigger*' narrative threads that have been identified in this study are those in which the participant described and explained **specific** factors that have influenced their attitudes about using physical punishment on children and their behaviour. These triggers were both intrinsic and extrinsic and included experiences in childhood, experiences as a parent, the influence of education or training programmes and witnessing situations such as other parents smacking (or using other forms of punishment) on children. These are all examples of personal episodic knowledge, which has influenced semantic knowledge and that, had a bearing upon subsequent behaviour. The following examples include situated experiences that participants regarded as triggers for change and thereby suggest ways in which individuals made sense of their experiences.

Childhood Experience.

Some participants conveyed that although they understood that smacking was regarded as an acceptable way to manage children's behaviour in the past,

during their own childhoods for example; some participants recollected the way that they had felt as smacked children. This, for some participants acted as the trigger for intergenerational change in the use of physical punishment:

Mum and Dad did smack; I do remember that. I've said that to my Mum, 'that's something that's really stuck with me, that you did smack me when I was little', and it's something that I've never done with my own children

(Moirira M P: 2).

Later in her narrative, Moira reiterated it was her experience of being smacked in childhood that influenced her decision not to use smacking with her own children. Additionally she compared the past with the changing social mores of the present, as the following quotation demonstrates:

"I think socially it's just not acceptable anymore" (Moirira M P: 2).

Other participants recalled feeling humiliation as smacked children (Janice M G: 1), and inferred this was not what they wanted for their own children. Both Janice (M G: 1) and Ilyana (M P: 2) explained that these experiences of physical punishment had a long-term affect upon the relationship they had with their fathers, who had meted out this form of punishment. In both instances the belt had been used to physically discipline:

I don't have a very good relationship with my father because of those strong memories of him disciplining my sister, strong discipline. I try to understand it but it's difficult because we've never really spoken about it properly (Ilyana M P: 2).

Ilyana, in her attempts to reconcile her father's actions attempted to view this in the context of his own fatherless and tough upbringing; however she concluded by saying:

...though, that's not an excuse for hitting your own children I don't suppose

(Ilyana M P: 1).

Later in her narrative Ilyana explained that her relationship with her young son was underpinned by her understanding of the need for attachment, which began with breast-feeding and that this "evolved into more gentle parenting"(10).

Experience as a parent

It was the most imminent memories, of parenthood rather than childhood that provided the richest source of *trigger* narrative threads. Amongst the emotions described that were associated with using smacking on children were, feeling guilty and upset, feeling ashamed, feeling really bad after it, and feeling a sense of loss of control. These recollections of feelings as smacking parents were all offered as triggers for a quest to parent their own children differently.

Other triggers experienced as parents include observation of a child being smacked in a public place, or experiencing criticism from a member of the public when they themselves had using smacking in a public place. Some parents described how they had found smacking had little effect upon behaviour and that other more positive measures were more successful.

A further kind of trigger was recounted by Hannah (M P: 1). She explained that observation of her partner using alternative strategies such as the use of humour and diversionary tactics with their children had prompted her to reflect upon the way she dealt with unruly behaviour. This possibly acted as a precursor to her turning point as described in exemplar three in the following chapter .

For other parents, the trigger was originated by the child's response. Carla, a young single mother explained it was when her daughter of below four years of age, said "no, don't smack me", that she started to reflect upon the position of children as defenceless and her own position of power. This example also illustrates the paradox that this 'defenceless' child was able to act as an agent for change. Thus challenging a view that small children cannot act as social agents for change.

Professional influence upon the personal

Around half of the Fife health visitor participants described how their experience of being a health visitor influenced the way in which they reared their own children. They recollected the way that what they had learned about child development and the use of positive behaviour management strategies as novice or student health visitors, had prompted to them to think about how they managed the behaviour of their own children. These health visitors explained how their health visiting practice had acted as a trigger for change upon their personal parenting behaviour. The point in the life course that these participants became health visitors can partly explain this phenomena, as it was usually

when their children were of pre-school age. Influence upon personal attitudes and behaviour seemed to be attributed to professional life rather than the converse; that personal experience of child rearing informed practice. Interestingly, this seems to be an unwritten or hidden positive outcome of this sort of professional education, since course providers may never be made aware as it is unlikely to be recorded within course evaluation.

Two other Fife health visitors explained, although they had used physical punishment with their own children when they were very young: if they had been health visitors at that stage in their lives, then they might have adopted more positive parenting approaches.

Alison, a Fife health visitor and grandparent explained how theories learned within a health visiting course had influenced her parenting style. This was illustrated with a recollection of an everyday sort of event that took place one morning prior to her attendance at a professional study day. On this particular morning, her daughter, who had a weakness in one arm, spilt milk all over the kitchen floor. Alison remembered her response had been to lose her temper and to shout at her:

My style of parenting started to change as I got into health visiting and I learnt more about psychology. I remember being at a study day with the psychologist and I remember thinking, in the great scheme of things, does it really matter, no one is going to get hurt if a bit of milk is spilt. So I started to stand back a bit, and to look at things differently and rather than chastise, say, this is happening a lot - what can we do differently? (Alison M P HV: 3).

Alison described her solution; she went on to buy smaller bottles of milk thus enabling her daughter to use them more easily. Although this is an example of a simple measure, this represented for Alison a new way of being a parent, and a move towards her reconstruction of her identity as a parent.

Unlike their counterparts on the mainland, island health visitors explained that due to resource issues such as travel costs, not all health visitors had been able to access training on supporting parents and parenting skills. Some health visitors on the mainland had described the way similar training had acted as a trigger, resulting in a change in the way that they wanted to experience being a parent and sometimes to question their previous use of physical punishment as new solutions for more positive parenting skills were learned. This lack of access to training of similar kind may have implications for the way that health visitors on the Western Isles understood the use of smacking by parents, as the likelihood of training to act as a trigger or catalyst was less likely to occur.

The sense of a need to preserve what was perceived to be the unique culture of an island family life and the intersection with beliefs about the legitimacy of parental use of smacking warrants further investigation with parents who are not health visitors, before further conclusions can be drawn.

6:4:2 Turning points

Turning point narrative threads were subtly different in that participants recounted a **specific moment in time** where they had experienced what Denzin (1989) refers to as an *epiphany*, a realisation that it was possible to be a

different sort of parent and that they could do things another way. From this point onwards life was lived along a different trajectory; a 'turn in the road' had occurred. These turning points generally seem to have followed a period of unhappiness or unease with how they perceived their identity as a parent to be; an identity crisis that had implications for the relationship they wanted to have with their children

Hannah, a parent of two young children who lived on the Scottish mainland, illustrated this with graphic imagery in the following quotation and later contextualised in the following chapter (Exemplar Three [p.257](#)).

I remember going out for a walk somewhere and jumping over a stream, and thinking, I used to be a really nice mummy and then I had this two child experience and turned into this quite nasty mummy - I thought it's all ruined, I've cocked it all up and there's nothing I can do about it. I suddenly thought, yes there is! I can! So that was a turning point (Hannah M P: 3).

Laura, another mainland parent was able to pin point a time she described as a turning point in her life, which changed the way in which she understood her relationship with her children and the parent that she wanted to be. Laura did not describe her turning point as the epiphany that Hannah described; instead she identified a series of triggers that culminated in the turning point.

Firstly, Laura recollected the way that she had felt as a child, always in need of approval,

"Looking externally rather than internally about what's right for me"

(Laura M P: 2).

Secondly, she explained that up to her youngest child being around eight years old she had been unhappy about her experience of being a parent, particularly in the way she felt that she was expected by her peers and by experts to behave as a parent, as illustrated in the following example:

I wasn't really comfortable about a whole load of other things, the playgroup thing, 'Oh they stop crying once you're gone'. I used to think 'that can't be right, your child must be telling you something'. But confused once again because all the experts were telling you it'll be OK (Laura M P: 2).

It was within this context of feeling unhappy about her identity as a parent that Laura experienced her *turning point*:

... then I happened to catch a programme about home education and that was a turning point for me – it was when I started to think about parenting more mindfully (Laura M P: 2).

Laura then went on to explain how she had learned to question her usual way of parenting in accordance with the philosophy embedded within 'Non- Violent Communication':

Things like, 'that's naughty', just turning that on it's head to really examine it
(Laura M P: 2).

Both Hannah and Laura explained that although they had reached a turning point, after which they had started out on a trajectory very different to what had gone on before, they still sometimes reverted to what they called the '*default position*'. Although this was their personal default position, the pre-turning point

position, there was also a sense that this is the position deeply embedded within society.

Tracy, a young single parent of two primary school aged children, recounted a further example of a personal turning point. Tracy's turning point was not restricted to her experience of being a parent; it also had an impact more generally upon her personal mental health. Tracy explained how the intervention of a family worker, had "totally turned her life around". She explained that prior to meeting her family worker, as a result of feeling depressed she sometimes had problems in managing the daily routines of getting her children to school on time:

"Things were not as good as they should be" (Tracy M P: 7).

Tracy reflected upon her situation and said:

If she had nae come in I probably still would be depressed and probably running riot somewhere and stuff like that, so yeah, she was brilliant

(Tracy M P: 7).

Tracy spoke of her hope for the future; to be no longer on state benefits to be able to get a part-time job soon. She finished her narrative by concluding,

" So, I'm really happy" (Tracy M P: 9).

There is a sense in which all of the narratives of transition contain something of a thread that is about personal development or evolution. Triggers and turning

points do not happen in a life independent of all else that takes place, such as other experiences during the life course which influence how transitions of being a child, growing up and becoming a parent are experienced. This is borne out by Schultz (2001 p.80) who in his analysis of the key turning points in the life of Oscar Wilde, the twentieth century playwright, described a gradual change in the way in which he understood the world that evolved into a 'moment of unmistakeable discovery'. Similarly, Denzin (1989 p.71) described different forms of epiphany, including what he terms 'the cumulative epiphany'. This signifies response to experiences that have been happening over a period of time, and it is this kind of epiphany, something quite gradual, that is illustrated in the following narrative thread.

6:4:3 Evolution

The third narrative thread is captured in the term *evolution*. Some of the participants (5 participants from the mainland of Scotland) did not link their personal experience of particular events to a change in attitude or behaviour, nor did they recall a moment in time when they started to enact a new way of being a parent, but instead described something more passive and subtle, a gradual moving along with the tide of change in cultural mores, a 'going with the flow'. This is illustrated in the following two quotations from parents who were also mainland health visitors.

I don't know if there was one particular situation, you just did what was the norm at the time, I don't really know where my attitude came from...it's just something that's evolved with me I suppose (Sarah M P HV: 4).

I've probably changed my parenting style a lot between my eldest child and my youngest child. I think that was probably due to influences at the time, a whole load of things. I think that society has changed as well; you know the whole thing about physical punishment. We never did a lot of smacking... but by the time I had my second child we decided that wasn't how we were going to bring them up (Pat M P HV: 2).

6:4:4 Preservation

In contrast to the responses to change described by participants on the Scottish mainland (parents, grandparents and health visitors), health visitors on the Western Isles (with one exception) did not describe specific turning points or events that had acted as triggers such as those described previously. Initially, on studying these findings I had assumed participants from the Western Isles had not experienced transition; however on closer reading of the transcripts and reminding myself of the contextual information these participants had provided by way of introduction to their personal narratives, it seemed more likely that their response to social change was to emphasise the need to preserve island family values and an island way of life. This narrative thread, *preservation*, can be described as a type of transition since it is a response to external change and as such, is included in the typography of transition. Since it is only possible to describe a period of transition retrospectively (Frank, 1995) a position of no transition cannot be assured; this is simply a position at a given point in time.

In order to explain this phenomenon, it is helpful to reconsider how participants described the way that they perceived the island way of life to be changing. The metaphor of change being for many, the recent demise of the tying up of the swings in the play park; the Sabbath day was becoming more secularised.

While many social changes such as this relaxing of the rules governing the keeping of the Sabbath were welcomed by all participants, there was an underlying sense that participants believed some aspects of family life perceived to be value and part of island family identity should be preserved. For example, a notion of an idyllic childhood in which childhood freedom was valued, was held in tension with the need for clear boundaries for behaviour; the former not possible without the other. Participants explained it was adherence to these boundaries that dispelled the need for physical punishment. The use of smacking was perceived to be a last resort and used only when children had exceeded the boundaries which had been set by their parents.

When this is explored alongside the findings presented in Grid One (Appendix Eight), which suggest that health visitors on the Islands were in the main in agreement that smacking might legitimately be used by parents and that parents should be in control, the idea of preservation of a time past is strengthened.

The four narrative threads, turning points, triggers, evolution and preservation form a typology of participants' response to society's changing attitudes toward the use of physical punishment on children. These different responses had implications for the way in which individual parents reconstructed their moral identity and ideas about relationship between parents and children. Those participants that described their experiences of turning points or triggers or as an evolution over time, seemed to be in agreement that to be a good parent is to have an 'equal' relationship with children. This sort of relationship is

characterised by the use of negotiation and recognition of children's agency and fostering reciprocity. Island participants were more likely than mainland participants to advocate preservation of a culture perceived to be eroding. They emphasised the need for the adult in the parent-child relationship to be the one that is in control, providing children with clear boundaries for behaviour. Perceived threats to the unique social and cultural context of being an islander seems to intersect with understandings of the social position of children.

The findings from the current doctoral study bear some similarity with an earlier study (Davis 1999) [identified in the literature review \(Chapter Two\)](#) Although Davis' work was mostly concerned with intragenerational change, findings linked mothers' and grandmothers' reasons for changing their behaviour to memories of their own childhood experience of being smacked. Exploration of the contexts of intragenerational change is quite different conceptually from that of inter-generational change. Parents who start out on a course in which they are smacking parents and then change are not only changing direction from the way of their parents as smacked children, but they are also making a turn in the road from the way that they started out with their own children (Davis 1999). Beliefs of some of the participants in the current study changed alongside societal change while others such as Hannah and Laura (see Exemplars Three and Four, Chapter Seven) in their quest to be non-violent parents, perceived themselves to be running ahead of the societal position. Hannah and Laura saw themselves as making waves that could influence not only their only children's experience of discipline in childhood but also as a contribution to shared cultural understanding of smacking in a time future.

Davis (1999) identified four different contexts for cessation of smacking; biographical, experiential, relational and ideological. These contexts can be compared to participants' experience of transition and understandings of smacking within the current study. Davis however, separates out biographical influences that stem from childhood from biographical influences of parenthood and terms the latter, experiential. In the current study, experience is considered conceptually as part of biography; childhood and parenthood are separated out as temporal social spaces. Some participants in the Davis (1999) study ceased to use smacking due to their experience of harsh punishment as children or as a result of their feelings as smacking parents. Others described the context of cessation as peer pressure, while others described an ideological shift in beliefs about the nature of parent-child relationship; parents should not smack just because they are bigger and stronger.

Although there are similarities in the findings of the two studies (Davis 1999 and the current doctoral study) the current study adds to existing knowledge a greater understanding about **how** these transitions have been experienced by individuals within specific social, cultural and historical contexts in a more nuanced way. One of the limitations of Davis' study referred to in his paper is that since semi-structure interviews rather than biographical narrative interviews were conducted, the contexts of cessation of smacking are not situated within a life story and therefore physical punishment 'careers' (p507) could not be mapped. This was addressed in the current study by using a biographical narrative interviewing approach. Another place where the two studies diverge methodologically is, unlike Davis' study, parents who had not ceased to use

smacking were also included as participants. This allowed the narrative thread, *preservation*, to be identified within the thematic content of the interview data.

6: 5 BEING IN SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

The third theme found running through the narratives was that of the nature of the individual's experience of smacking in relation to changing society. The way in which participants alluded to this phenomenon is described and illustrated with quotations from the narratives in the following section.

Participants' narratives, although personal stories, cannot be considered an 'individual production' according to Denzin (1989 p.73) and Tilly (1984). Instead they are derived from a specific historical, cultural and ideological social context.

This was evident in the way in which participants situated themselves within a changing society, a society in the process of transition. Reference was made to what was believed to be current prevailing mores on the use of physical punishment on children, and expectations of child- parent relationships within family life. There was acknowledgment that social change was the milieu in which experience of triggers and turning points and more gradual evolution had taken place. This was exemplified in statements that referred to the practice of smacking such as, 'I know it's not politically correct, but... ', or by saying ' It's not politically correct anymore'. By using the term 'political correctness', these participants isolated themselves from what they believed to be a societal view

that was different to what had once been acceptable; they inferred a different personal stance.

The role of the participant/ narrator as a 'writer' of history, a personal history, may be a way in which events in the past are mediated. By this, I mean the way events, such as the experience of physical punishment can be reconciled; these events belong to a time past rather than the present. Where this was acknowledged, there was a sense of empathy. This is illustrated in the following quotation from a joint interview with Jill and her mother Jane. Jill reminded her mother that her use of smacking with Jane and her brother was in accordance with the norms of the day and that although she had never considered smacking her own children, she accepted that her own experience of being smacked as a child was part of something that belonged to the past.

But you probably thought that smacking was quite a normal thing when you were bringing us up because that's what parents did then (Jill M P: 5).

Jane went on to explain that when she was a child, children's views or preferences were rarely sought. She poignantly described herself as feeling 'only one quarter of the whole', with her views being of less value than that of adult family members. She contrasted this with her present observations of family life, saying that today children are put first.

There's a sort of feeling that children are now more important than parents, or virtually. They're not level, they're actually in the front row now and that's happened in a generation (Jane M G: 12).

Within the narratives there is interplay between ideas of both structure and agency as participants constantly moved between the past and the present, taking into account the influence of changing family and community norms and values, and ideologies of family life, but also portraying themselves to be non passive, in a position of agency, constructing and reconstructing self- identity. Denzin (1989) challenged the idea that individuals make their own history and instead suggests that within self-stories, narrators often neglect the influence of structural factors upon their lives. The way this resonates with participants' narratives within this study is explored in the narrative exemplars that are discussed in the following chapter. These exemplars illustrate how participants described a number of different influences upon their experience of transition, with personal experience both as a child and as a parent being the most influential.

Interestingly, issues about legislation on the use of physical punishment were rarely volunteered by participants and were never described as triggers for behaviour change. Instead, discussion about anti-smacking legislation was usually in response to questions asked at interview. Participants did not seem to make an overt connection between children's rights and any need for anti-smacking legislation. While agreeing there is a need for children's voices to be heard and that children should be protected from harm, participants were more likely to explain what they believed to be possible limitations of the legislation. Some (11 participants) believed it was an unnecessary state intervention in family life; while others (14 participants) pointed to the difficulty in enforcing the legislation due to what was perceived to be ambiguities within it and to a lack of

resources in policing such laws. Only three participants gave an unqualified 'yes' when asked if they agreed that current Scottish anti-smacking law could help to influence attitudes towards the parental use of smacking (see Grid One, Appendix Eight).

6:6 SUMMARY

The narrative threads that were about personal transitions, evolution, turning points, triggers and preservation took place within the context of transition from childhood to parenthood. The stories of childhood acted as narrative beginnings for connections made between experience in childhood and experience and aspirations as a parent. Furthermore, these accounts of childhood experience acted as a prompt for exploring the narratives further, to find out more about how participants experienced transition: what the personal contexts of transition were. When participants recounted their experiences of transition as parents, smacking was not regarded as an isolated phenomena, but instead part of a much wider context, that of moral identity as a parent and the positioning of children as either equal or in need of boundaries set by a parent in control.

What is missing from this paradigmatic analysis of narratives is some sense of participants' life stories in their entirety as narrated. In the following chapter, six narrative exemplars have been re-presented to allow you the reader to glimpse into the lives portrayed within them.

Another way of looking was required in order to analyse and interpret events presented within a single narrative. A review of transition literature (as cited previously) revealed another 'lens' with which to explore the data, which had

resonance with my reading and re-reading participants' narratives. By using Frank's (1995) framework of transition to explore this data, another layer of interpretation has helped to achieve a deeper level of understanding about how individuals have integrated semantic and episodic knowledge to make sense of their experience and in the construction of identity. The following chapter begins with a brief description of Frank's (1995) typology and an explanation of how it was used to help to interpret the selected narrative exemplars.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NARRATIVE EXEMPLARS: LIVES IN TRANSITION

7:1 INTRODUCTION

Analysis of a narrative in its entirety, when interpreted within the context of a life story rather than paradigmatically, across all of the narrative data, can potentially allow a richer or deeper level of interpretation. The findings presented in the previous chapter did not seem to adequately explain participants' experiences as I had understood them in my privileged position at the time of interview. As Polkinghorne (1988) suggested, narrative research configures events in such a way that their part in the entire story (of a life) becomes clear. I have selected a number of participants' narratives that most clearly elucidate the narrative threads discovered by the paradigmatic analysis discussed in the previous chapter. In the following re-presentation of the selected exemplars, by using the idea of plot, connections have been made between different episodes and experiences in individual's lives and how they have been understood and meaning created. Some of the quotations from participants narratives used in the previous chapter to illustrate different narrative threads, are recontextualised within the narrative exemplars discussed in this chapter.

The previous chapter concluded by saying, another way of exploring these narrative exemplars was required and that ideas from Frank's (1995) analysis of narratives provided useful framework for looking and listening in a different kind

of way. Before applying Frank's typology of transition to the narrative exemplars selected from the current study, the following section briefly explains some of the concepts that are found within it. The use of Frank's typology of transition helps to explore **how** participants experienced turning points, triggers evolution and preservation as discussed in the previous chapter of this doctoral thesis.

Frank (1995) identified three main narrative types in his analysis of stories of patients' experience of transition from wellness to illness: chaos quest, and restitution. According to Frank (1995) these stories of transition have shared cultural resonance; they belong to a genre that we all understand. They enable the narrator to tell their story within the structure of a familiar plot and they allow the listener to engage with the narrative and to reflect upon their own self – story. In the following section these narrative types will be described and their relevance to this study is explained.

7:1:1 Chaos

Within stories of chaos, vulnerability, futility and loss of control are revealed. According to Frank's (1995) analysis, chaos narratives often serve to tell how easily anyone of us can be 'sucked under' (p97). This is a stark contrast to restitution narratives, that are in essence reassuring; they speak of the possibilities for the future, that no matter how bad things get, it is possible to overcome; the story can have a happy ending. Frank points out that since chaos stories are presented as a reality, this could also happen to you, they are threatening to listen to. There is discomfort in the listening to these chaos stories if as a researcher and listener an ethical stance is taken. By this, Frank

is referring to the need to be an empathetic listener. He adopts Halpern's definition of empathy, which is described as, not taking on the narrators self-story as one own, but instead to listen with 'engaged curiosity' to the teller's particular emotional perspective (Halpern 2001).

Features of chaos narratives include, lack of control, loss of agency. The term the 'unmaking of a persons world' is used by Frank (p103) to describe the emotional depth of chaos experienced. This phrase has particular resonance with Carol's (I P HV) narrative as described in Exemplar One. Within the experience of chaos there is inability to make sense of what is going on at the time. Distance in a temporal sense is needed for the chaos story to be told; therefore it is by nature reflective. According to Frank it is not possible to tell the story while the chaos is being lived; the chaos story that is recounted is a story that is already taking place at a distance. Some narrators suggest that life events are mediated by the telling. As I listened to Carol's recollection of the events of her chaos narrative I was aware of almost a sense of relief as she told her story, tentatively at first. In the first of the selected exemplars of chaos narratives, Carol reflected upon an event that brought chaos into her life and who at the time of telling her story did not seem to have achieved restitution; while the second exemplar of a chaos narrative that has been selected (Tracy M P)) is both a story of chaos and of restitution; it was for me the listener, a story of hope.

7:1:2 Quest

According to Frank (1995) quest narratives are those in which a challenge is faced head on. The narrator steps out on the metaphorical journey of their quest. In Frank's analysis the quest relates to a journey through illness that may have been preceded by chaos and that ends in restitution. I suspect only those stories that actually end in restitution have been published, in the media for example. The story of a 'battle' for cancer won through personal resolution and engagement with extreme challenges to the body such as the marathon run, are more likely to be newsworthy than those in which the quest was not achieved (see also McKay and Bonner 1999 and Seale 2002).

Quest stories are those most likely to feature 'fairy tale heroes', overcoming whatever they meet in their path (Propp 1968). Chaos and restitution stories remain in the background while the story of quest is told. In this doctoral study, quest stories are not simply those in which participants have described the way in which they have sought ways of coping with childrearing challenges, they are also reflections upon a more fundamental quest for the self-identity as a parent that had once been envisaged. The quest for self-identity as a 'good mother' was inextricably linked with the quest for a different kind of relationship with children compared to own experience as children in a way that resonates with O'Neill's ideas about recognition and reciprocity (1994, see Literature Review). The quest was described as a journey in which helpful tools were found along the way. This is exemplified in the two life- stories that I have selected to illustrate this narrative type (Hannah's story and Laura's story, both mainland parents).

7:2:3 Restitution

The restitution narratives in terms of Frank's stories of illness are about restoration to health. They look to the future, to a time when despite becoming sick, there will be a return to wellness. However, within this study, restitution narratives are best summed up in the words of Hannah, a mother of three young children:

I used to be a really nice mummy, then I had this two child experience and turned into this quite nasty mummy (Hannah M P: 3).

Hannah went on to recount her quest for the restoration of her identity as a "nice mummy" (See exemplar 3).

Frank explains that restitution narratives can be told both retrospectively and prospectively. Though both of the exemplars that I have selected by way of illustration of this narrative type are retrospective, there is an element of prospective restitution in Tracy's (M P) story, implicit in the positive conclusion to her narrative (Exemplar 2).

In the same way that Frank speaks of how the restitution narrative is learned institutionally, as patients listen, and learn from the telling of such stories in self-help groups for instance, I suggest that the restitution narratives recounted in this study are influenced by the current social and cultural context. For example, diverse forms of media depiction within popular culture such as the print media, radio broadcasts and television documentaries, may influence what it is to be a good mother, good father or a good parent and shared understandings about

the nature of childhood. Print media narratives, explored previously within Chapter Four, represented what it is to be a good parent in different and contradictory ways. For example, the 'Smack Dad' represented in the print media (Daily Record, 1999. See Chapter Four) within the context of proposed legislative change on parents' use of smacking, may have been represented as the 'Good Dad' in another social context, in time past and within a perspective that positions children in need of shaping by adults. The implications are that the quest for a particular self-identity as a parent and thereby the position of restitution that is sought, is both temporally and culturally determined. Moving from a position of being a smacking parent or having been a smacked child, to a position of being a non smacking parent for some participants has involved experience of chaos, a quest for alternative parenting tools and finally restitution. This is made evident in the narrative exemplars that have been selected to illustrate restitution (see Exemplar 5, Joni's (M P) story and Exemplar 6, Janice's (M G) story).

Frank's (1995) typology of transition, *Quest*, *Chaos* and *Restitution stories*, have been used in this study as what Frank calls 'listening devices' (Frank 1995, p76). This process has resulted in a typology of stories that relate to individual experience. These narrative types have helped to interpret the meaning of specific episodes that were associated with parenting and the use of physical punishment, that happened within a life and against the backdrop of societal change. Although I have selected two exemplars for each of the narrative types, just as Frank explained, within each of the selected narratives

there is a main story type, the other narrative types sometimes sit in the wings while one story takes centre stage.

7:2 CHAOS NARRATIVES

Both of the narratives selected that feature chaos as a narrative type have within their main emplotted story the state as a key actor. However, this role is played out in very different ways and consequently the outcome for each of the narrators is quite different.

7:2:1 Exemplar One: Carol's narrative: State Intervention: The 'Not Smack'

Carol introduced her narrative by describing her childhood experience in accordance with the typical idyllic island childhood described previously in chapter five; a time of freedom, roaming the countryside on bicycles, tempered by adherence to the family's cultural rules and boundaries set by loving parents.

Though born in the Scottish Highlands, Carol and her family returned to her mother's birthplace on the Western Isles when she was around twelve years of age. Carol had no memories of being smacked as a young child, but recollected a time when after returning home drunk at age fifteen, her father in an isolated incident, had "skelped her around the head". Although this experience, in Carol's words had given her fright, she went on to emphasise that both she and her brother were very lucky; they had no recollections of family upsets.

Carol drew parallels with her own childhood experience when describing her experience as a parent; her quest was to raise her own children in much the

same way as she had experienced herself, to enjoy freedom at the same time as adhering to cultural rules and boundaries for behaviour.

Carol's narrative features what I came to regard as the 'not smack'. As in some of the other participants narratives there was a statement that went something along these lines, 'I have never smacked my children', only to contradict this later in the interview. This raises interesting methodological issues about inconsistency and truth in narrative interviews as discussed previously in the methodology chapter of this doctoral thesis (Chapter Two).

Initially Carol stated she had never smacked her own children, seeing them as vulnerable:

It's just something I couldn't do; a big person to a wee one

(Carol I P HV: 2).

Carol defined smacking, anywhere on the body, as a form of violence. However, despite holding this opinion, she did not agree with the view with either current legislation or legislative measures to outlaw any parental use of smacking. Carol's beliefs about relationships between children and adults, that children should respect adults and should learn rules and boundaries for behaviour was in accordance with views expressed by a number of Western Isles Health Visitors. This example of intergenerational continuity is captured in the narrative thread, 'preservation', explored in the previous chapter.

It was not until towards the end of the interview, Carol tentatively broached what was to be her narrative of chaos, the dominant narrative type within her story.

Just as in Frank's narratives of chaos, Carol began by saying tentatively, "You're not going to believe this story actually, but it's definitely true". In beginning her story in this way, Carol drew me in as a listener to what was to follow, a story of events that had brought chaos to her life and that of her family. Carol seemed to be appealing to me on two different levels, understanding her story as a fellow health visitor, and understanding the story as a fellow parent about events that were to bring chaos to a loving parent.

She described how her daughter at age fifteen was going out with a boy she described as "the worst boy in town". He had spent time in a young offenders institution and was 'tagged' electronically. Carol discovered her daughter had been using alcohol and drugs, and had assumed her boyfriend was to blame for influencing this behaviour.

Things came to a head when one night her daughter did not return home as usual. After a night of feeling immensely worried about her safety, her daughter returned home the following afternoon but did not offer any explanations as to why she had not let her parents know where she had been. As they sat opposite each other, Carol implored her daughter to explain what had happened. In response, her daughter screamed, "you get out of my face". Carol responded by smacking her daughter's legs. Both Carol and her daughter left the scene in tears.

Carol explained this was the only time that she had smacked her daughter. The following day, after her daughter had reported this event to the local social work department (directed by her boyfriend) a child protection investigation was

instigated. This included interviews with both police and social workers at the police station and an order that Carol was not to make contact with her daughter who had been placed with a relative during the period of investigation. Carol implored me to understand the effects this investigation had wrought upon her mental health saying:

Imagine, the social work department brought this confident loving mother to the brink of suicide, I don't know if this is a common thing, they invaded my life and they destroyed it unnecessarily...Thank God, I'm well known in these parts, in this community, and that I love my children, or I wouldn't be here just now, because these people were really out of order

(Carol I P HV: 11).

Later these sentiments were reiterated:

It was the worst ordeal I've had to go through; I had to tell my line manager, I'll never get over it. Never! (Carol I P HV: 11)

As found in other participants' narratives, there are what seem to be contradictions, or what Watson (2008) describes as 'aporias'. Although Carol initially positioned herself as a non-smacking parent, and sought to convey to me this real self, she later went on to describe the event in which she had smacked, with wide reaching consequences that seemed to reveal a dislocated identity (Watson 2006). The use of this language of negation both reveals and conceals something of the narrator; the real self and the self that is conveyed. It reveals the way that narrators position themselves in relation to the researcher and in relation to the social context of smacking. There is a tension here between the self- identity, the real self that Carol wanted to convey, the identity

that is the object of her quest, and the identity in which she was 'officially' labelled as a smacking parent. Additionally, there is tension between perceptions of how a parent is expected to behave in the light of current social and cultural prescription that smacking is not an acceptable parenting behaviour and actual experience. This aporia can possibly be explained as evidence of Carol's continuing experience of chaos, as she attempted to re-construct her identity as a non-smacking parent.

Chaos within this narrative took place at both intrinsic and extrinsic levels. Carol experienced emotional turmoil, as she no longer knew what to expect; the situation moved along in a way that was out of her control. In this scenario powerful structures challenged Carol's sense of agency. Carol felt as a parent, disempowered by the state; control had been taken away from her by those in authority leaving her in a vulnerable and isolated position in which her identity as a caring parent had been dislocated or challenged.

Furthermore, Carol's unmet expectations that her daughter would heed rules and boundaries learned through socialisation according to family and Island values can also be thought of in terms of chaos. The rebellious behaviour with its subsequent effect upon the relationship between Carol and her daughter was not meant to happen, this was not meant to be the reward for being a loving parent as far as Carol was concerned.

Lastly, according to Carol, there seems to be incongruence between the way in which social workers and police officers interpreted and enacted current legislation and what Carol understood as a health visitor about the need to

support families rather than to report, to be enabling rather than to be destructive. What is unsaid in the narrative is any understanding of a perspective that recognises children and young peoples' right to be heard and to be able to make decisions about their own lives. From my position on the outside of the situation, however, a tension can be envisaged, in the statutory agencies mandate to listen to and to advocate for children, while at the same time offering support for parents.

On listening to Carol's story and on reading and re-reading the interview transcripts it seems as though to some extent Carol was still experiencing chaos as she questioned, "how could this have happened to me, to my family?" Although chaos is the dominant narrative type found within Carol's story, there is some evidence of the beginnings of restitution as Carol explained that her relationship with her daughter was improving. It is likely that it is this glimmer of restitution, which made it possible for Carol to recount her chaos narrative; there is a sense of prospective restitution as slowly over time emotional wounds heal (Frank 1995).

The idea of restitution can help to explain how and why this story of chaos was recounted. The act of telling may have played a part in restitution. Frank (1995 p. xii) refers to the philosopher Kierkegaard, who described the 'ethical person as editor of his life: to tell one's life is to assume responsibility for that life'. Frank took up this theme and explained that in the telling of the events that happened within a life, the voice (that was lost amid chaos) is recovered and that the story- teller becomes a witness to the conditions that rob others of their

voice. In other words the story is told on behalf of others who may find themselves caught up in similar situations, and editorial decisions are made about how the story is recounted. As a result of the telling, the recovery of the voice, others are enabled to speak through that story as it resonates with their experience.

In the re-telling of Carol's story I have cast her in this role. Carol hinted that she would not want anyone else to have to go through what she had been through, how the experience had been of great cost to her emotionally and how it was important for wider society and policy makers to understand that there was a potential flaw in the system. Carol's story sits alongside print media representation of issues surrounding anti- smacking legislation and the potential to criminalise loving parents, as discussed previously: a media story that she perceived to have become a reality. Carol did explain to me that she had a need to tell her story and had mentioned she had thought about writing to the Scottish First Minister. Instead, in an act of trust, she handed her story over to me: it became my responsibility. By this, I mean to be an ethical listener and disseminator.

Frank (1995 p 109) suggests there is a need to honour chaos stories because if these stories are not recounted, 'the world in all its possibilities is being denied'. It was important to tell this particular story because it was recounted with a purpose. It acts as a warning of possible consequences, if for example legislation to outlaw the use of smacking is introduced in the future. The unspoken text is that this could happen to you, to any parent and that there is a

need to publicise such seemingly unjust consequences that pits the rights of children against those of their parents.

Carol's chaos narrative was a story that once could not be told, that is, at the time of the event according to Frank. Carol's story now has the distance afforded by time, which has allowed reflection upon events. Frank (1995) also warned that chaos narratives are painful to hear. This has resonance for me as the listener, as I allowed myself to engage with the story and to empathise with Carol's experience of what could potentially have been mine as a parent. Additionally, as a Health Visitor I envisaged an alternative and more positive way of managing situations such as this; the voice in my head saying what I could not verbalise in my role as listener/ researcher, 'how did this happen in this way?' Although as a researcher I recognised that this story was for Carol 'a truth', as in all of the stories I recorded, I was unable to learn 'truth' according to the other actors that played a part in the narrative. On reflection, and on re-reading Carol's narrative, this story seems to be told in order to justify her position, that legislation to ban the use of smacking may criminalise loving parents who occasionally smack their children and that instead, *preservation* of culturally prescribed rules and boundaries may act to foster relationships in which children have respect for adults and in which adults are allowed to in control.

In the following exemplar, Tracy's story, the narrative types chaos and restitution sit side by side. Though the focus of the narrative is also upon an

event that was about state intervention to protect children, the outcome is somewhat different to that discovered in Carol's story.

7:2:2 Exemplar 2: Tracy's Narrative: State Intervention: Turning a Life Around

Tracy is a young single parent of two primary school aged children. She was introduced to me through 'Gingerbread', an organisation that offers practical support and guidance for single parents.

She was one of five children and did not have strong recollections of being smacked as a child. She explained that instead her parents would 'ground' her or withhold pocket money; if for example, she skipped school (this was often) or stayed out late at night. Tracy had moved out of the family home and vicinity in her mid teens and returned to the neighbourhood with her very young children around four years ago. Her relationship with her parents at this time was not close and Tracy explained they had "fallen out".

As a parent of very young children Tracy recounted that she had smacked her children. She explained this was often when she was at the 'end of her tether' and she could not take any more. The kinds of behaviour warranting a smack according to Tracy were, saying 'bad words', swearing or running out into the road. Tracy went on to explain how a number of triggers and a life changing turning point contributed to changing the way in which she dealt with these situations and the way she saw herself as a parent. Firstly, she no longer smacked her children on account of their age; to use Tracy's own words:

They were getting too old for all of that, and I didn't want them remembering me as someone who hit them all the time (Tracy M P: 2).

Secondly, Tracy explained that following the times she had smacked her children she had felt guilty and upset and said she did not like the feelings that she had experienced and consequently would rather avoid the use of smacking. Thirdly, Tracy had come to realise smacking was not always effective and that other more positive methods of managing behaviour provided an alternative.

Tracy went on to talk about a crucial event that took place at this time, when her life was in a state of chaos. Tracy related a story of moving from chaos to restitution. At time of emotional turmoil, when on retrospect Tracy felt she had been depressed; a primary school teacher had noticed the children had been arriving late for school and as Tracy said, "things were not as good as they should be". The schoolteacher suggested a family worker might be able to offer her support. Tracy initially turned this down and explained to me, "I don't like social workers whatsoever". After some explanation of their role however, Tracy agreed to give this a try. According to Tracy this was the best decision she had ever made. The family worker had helped Tracy to try different approaches to managing challenging behaviour and had helped her to learn coping strategies for herself. Additionally, the family worker had helped Tracy to re-establish her relationship with her family, particularly with her mother. Over time the bond between herself and her mother was re-established and Tracy described her family relationships as "really close now".

Tracy's story suggests a number of triggers combined together influenced the way in which she perceived the use of smacking with her children. Tracy's involvement with her family worker happened at a time when her children were beyond what Tracy believed to be a pre-rational stage of development. The way in which the children perceived her as a mother and the need to ensure positive memories of childhood were fostered had become increasingly important to Tracy as her children grew older. Reading between the lines, it is likely that Tracy sought to avoid the sort of break down in relationships that she herself had experienced with her own mother. In addition, Tracy had found smacking was becoming a less effective tool to promote desirable behaviour. These triggers culminated in a turning point that was to turn her perception of her self around, "Aye, turned my life around -completely". Tracy was able to move from seeing herself as unable to cope to being able to develop helpful coping strategies and decision-making: thus, an emergent moral self-identity as a 'good mother'. It is not clear from Tracy's narrative how deeply aware she was of the level of chaos in her life at the time of this event, or if this was something she concluded retrospectively, or even during the telling of her story with me.

Although Tracy intimated that she was looking back on a period of chaos and was experiencing restitution, Tracy's final statements point to what Frank (1995) described as prospective restitution. Her talk about her plans for re-housing and the possibility of part-time work as a reality, and the strengthening of her relationship with her family look to a time future, a time when she will feel a greater level of control over her own life. As also discovered in exemplar one, and as Frank suggests, it was probably this sense of restitution that made the

telling of this story of chaos possible. Chaos, according to Frank cannot be told while it is being experienced, as it is too painful, too immediate. It is possible Tracy might not have agreed to participate in this study had she not found the happy ending within her emplotted story.

For Tracy, changing her behaviour in relation to the use of physical punishment was not simply dependent upon education about alternative forms of management, but instead is an example of the way in which wider socio-ecological factors and personal history influence the experience of being a parent.

This exemplar serves to describe timely and appropriate state intervention that Tracy later recognised to be preventative. Without this intervention Tracy explained she may have continued to feel depressed and that her life may have remained in chaos:

I probably would still be depressed and probably running riot somewhere and stuff like that, so yeah, she was brilliant (Tracy M P: 7).

Earlier in the interview, when prompted for her opinions about the value of a complete ban on the use of smacking, Tracy emphatically stated this was an area in which the state should not intervene; parents should be able to choose how they bring up their children. She explained that she believed any such legislation could give children too much power, and that after all:

At the end of the day, it's your bairns and you should be able to do what you feel is right, as long as it isn't going too far obviously

(Tracy M P: 3).

Tracy said she did not believe the non-injurious use of smacking to be a form of abuse and that parents should be able to choose to smack occasionally, to help children to learn right from wrong and to act as a deterrent.

If you only smack them occasionally it's more likely to stick in their head when they do something wrong cos they'll remember if they're going to do that thing again (Tracy M P: 4).

These comments about smacking seem to be at odds with Tracy's own experience of how she had felt as a smacking parent, guilty and upset. One way of interpreting this may be in considering Tracy's own relationship with the authority of the state, perceiving state control to remove any of her own sense of control or autonomy. For example, it was only when she was able to think of the family worker as a friend, rather than an agent of the state (social worker) that she could accept this service and for it to provide a turning point.

Tracy's view of the state was essentially characterised as disempowering. For Tracy, the decision to no longer smack was not related to compliance with any mandate, but instead was embedded within the context of her life story and the need to perceive her decision to be a personal choice with short and long-term benefits for her children and for herself. At a time of personal crisis, Tracy had experienced and had valued an approach from statutory agencies, education and social work, that was negotiated and supportive rather than one which focused upon an immediate requirement to report.

Despite Tracy having had a positive experience of working with a family worker, at a time when due to personal stress her children's needs were sometimes

neglected; Tracy seems to dissociate ideas about safeguarding children from legislative action to ban the use of smacking. Instead she turns to the sort of rhetoric found in the print media that depicts the state as interfering in family life. This may in part be because at the time of interview, Tracy was still working out her position on smacking, and was doing identity work. By this I mean she was constructing and re-constructing her moral identity as a parent as a work in progress.

On reflection I think I have included this narrative because for me as a health visitor it has resonance. It is a story of hope I would like to be able to tell for the families that I worked with. I imagine it is the story that as health and social care professionals, we would all like to recount. Furthermore, Tracy's story offers support for O'Neill's assertions, that in order to achieve a 'covenant society', in which human beings are recognised as equal and in which reciprocity within relationships is fostered, the state should support parents and children (O'Neill 1994). O'Neill views state support as something that goes beyond legislature to include provision of community support intervention. This is a position that has resonance with contemporary discussion that recognises the promotion of sensitive parenting as a public health issue in order to prevent poor outcomes for children and families (Barlow 2010).

7:3 QUEST NARRATIVES

The following two exemplars have been selected to illustrate the use of Quest as a narrative type. There are similarities in the stories as within each one a

quest to find tools is described and in each case this discovery brings about self-identity transformation. The three narrative types, chaos, quest and restitution as found in both Laura and Hannah's stories are the mechanisms by which the narratives in their entirety are emplotted, as they provide the structure of a beginning, middle and end (Polkinghorne 1988).

7:3:1 Exemplar Three: Hannah's Narrative: Finding the Tools

Hannah is a mother of two children both under five years of age. She lives with her partner and his son from a previous relationship on the Scottish mainland.

Hannah described a number of events that were crucial to her own experience of childhood. Both she and her younger brother lived with their mother following what Hannah described as 'one of the first in the great wave of 70s divorces'. Although she described this divorce as messy and remembered a lot of 'fighting and shouting', as an adult, Hannah was able to empathise with their position saying:

They didn't know what was happening, we didn't know what was happening and they were very distressed (Hannah M P: 1).

This was followed by a period in which Hannah's mother became depressed. Hannah as a child was aware of financial hardship as her mother confided in her. Hannah summed up her experience of family life as a young child:

The general tenure was not a happy family, a lot of shouting and a lot of fighting (Hannah M P: 1).

As an older child Hannah recalled being allowed a lot of freedom saying that her mother trusted her and she was allowed to do pretty much as she liked as

long as she let her mother know what she was doing. Round about this time, Hannah's mother became extremely sick, with a physical illness and was required to spend a considerable time in hospital over the course of a year.

Although Hannah recollected that her mother rarely used physical discipline, she was able to recall one specific occasion when her mother asked her to hold out her hand to be smacked. Hannah explained that it was probably the rarity of such action that gave it a place in her memory. Janice, Hannah's mother participated in an interview with me on a separate occasion and was able to confirm Hannah's recollections. Janice explained that despite holding strong views against using any kind of physical punishment on children, there had been occasions in which out of frustration she used physical punishment with her children. Janice's story is taken up later in this chapter in exemplar 5.

Hannah went on to describe the way her mother's strong views about inequity and injustice in the world had influenced the way that she saw the world, such as:

A strong egalitarian sense that things should be fairer (Hannah: 1).

Hannah went on to describe her own experience as a parent as one of turmoil following the birth of her second child, Ben. She explained that although she knew her first son, Sam, now four and half years of age, needed her attention, she felt unable to manage both his needs and the needs of the baby.

It's like I only had room for one baby and Sam had been it until the night that Ben was born, and I didn't know how to relate to him any longer...He

was angry for about a year and started to do things that he'd never done. It was often when I was feeding Ben that it would happen. I would shout at him, I would shake with anger – but I was feeding Ben and I found it difficult to move. This turmoil went on for about a year” (Hannah M P: 2).

Hannah explained that during this period of turmoil, she was more likely to smack as a reaction to Sam's behaviour, at a time when she felt angry and in a rage, unable to cope, despite her principle that adults should never hit children. Hannah suggested that this kind of reactive use of smacking was potentially more worrying than the use of smacking as a punishment in a more measured kind of way, since in anger it is possible to inflict hurt or injury. Hannah described her use of smacking as self-indulgent; she was aware she was making some sort of decision to smack, though was careful to smack on a body part such as the legs or bottom; “a place that was sore, but wouldn't in any way damage them”. On one hand Hannah acknowledged she smacked because it made her feel better and in the moment of anger she could not stop herself, but at the same time it was a behaviour that she did not want to engage in.

Hannah described her ‘turn in the road’ quite graphically in the following quotation, also used in the previous chapter to describe her ‘turning point’. It is repeated here as it signifies the starting place for her quest:

I remember going out for a walk somewhere with everybody and jumping over a stream and I caught myself thinking, ‘I used to be a really nice mummy and I remember thinking that quite a lot. I had thought that I was quite a nice mummy and then I had this two child experience and I turned into this quite nasty mummy and I just thought, it's all ruined, I've cocked it up and there's nothing that I can do about it. So I suddenly thought, ‘yes

there is! I can, I don't have to stay like this. I can start being nice like I used to'. So that was a turning point (Hannah M P: 3).

Hannah longed to reclaim her identity as a good mother and described how from her turning point onwards she actively sought alternative ways of managing the sort of situations she had found so frustrating. This was described as 'looking for tools along the way'.

Hannah collected a number of tools in her quest to find a way of being the sort of parent she wanted to be with the support of her partner. From him she was inspired to learn how to use humour or distraction to diffuse a situation. Hannah also used communication skills learned at a 'Non Violent Communication' course. Hannah described how this involved communicating her own needs to the children and recognising the children also had needs that were associated with their behaviour. This premise was used to guide negotiation and to achieve the behaviour that was desired by adopting a positive approach. Hannah pointed out a similarity between her own values and that of her mother in relation to allowing children to take reasonable risks in order to learn self-reliance.

Hannah concluded her narrative by affirming she had not used smacking for years now and that although there have been times when she has been "uninspiring" as a parent, and that sometimes she has "lashed out", these kinds of events were no longer interpreted as failures. Instead Hannah said she now felt more equipped to reflect upon the situation and to be able to identify any possible antecedents that have contributed to her feelings and subsequent

behaviour. The idea of the need to find tools to equip parents is one that was referred to in the previous chapter. Lesley (M P HV), with hindsight, had recognised her parents inconsistencies in disciplining her sister and herself as children, might have been due to their inexperience as parents, and suggested a sense that over time they too had picked up “tools along the way”.

Hannah’s narrative contains something of all three narrative types. Chaos is typified in her experience of turmoil associated with what she perceived to be, becoming a ‘nasty mummy’. A turning point at a very specific moment in time resulted in a quest that enabled her to experience restitution, in that her self-identity as a good mother was salvaged.

There is a sense in which quest narratives are recounted for a purpose. They have a sense of what Frank (1995) termed *manifesto*. This idea of quest resonates with other parents’ narratives within this study and from other sources. As in Frank’s cancer narratives (Frank 1995), they communicate to their audience the message that this is possible, this can be achieved, and there is a way through the turmoil. This theme is taken up in the following narrative exemplar, which also features a quest for parenting tools.

7:3:2 Exemplar Four: Laura’s Narrative: The Ripple Effect.

Laura (M P) began her narrative by reflecting upon how her experience of childhood had influenced her self-identity and her own experience of being a parent. Memories of being criticised and having always to do as her parents told

her were aspects of what Laura described as 'the cultural way of being' at that time. She explained that on looking back to her childhood years, she was now quite sure her parents did love her though at the time this was not expressed openly. Laura used a quotation from Roald Dahl's children's novel, 'Matilda' to sum up her understanding of her childhood relationship with her parents.

I'm right and you're wrong, I'm big and you're little, I'm smart and you're stupid (Laura: 7).

Laura remembered being smacked as a child, feeling out of control and alone and thinking 'no-one really knows me'. This sense of 'might is right' was something that even as an adult, Laura explained she found hard to shake off. As a consequence Laura described how she felt the need for external approval, and explained it was not until she was in her forties that she felt able to make decisions about parenting that were 'right' for her.

Laura described how as a young parent she often had felt at odds with the kinds of advice that she was given from both her peers and experts and often felt confused, as she did not always agree with their opinions. For example, playgroup leaders assured her that her toddler would stop crying once she went away. Laura had felt uncomfortable with this advice, as her unvoiced view was that her child was trying to communicate with her. Lacking in confidence, she felt unable to resist this kind of advice. Similarly, Laura explained she had not found health visitors to be particularly helpful, as they had offered 'the standard cultural response'.

Laura reached her turning point after watching a television programme about educating children at home. Laura said that it was after this turning point that she began to “think about parenting more mindfully” (Laura M P: 2).

As part of her earnest quest, Laura read numerous books on parenting, including those that offered very rigid advice for positive parenting, and others that instead of offering solutions to particular behaviour problems, focused upon communication and relationship. It was the latter that Laura found most helpful as they offered her tools to try which she felt comfortable with. Like Hannah in the previous exemplar, these tools involved learning to understand the needs of children and to help them as partners within the family to understand the needs of their parents. Laura gave the following example to illustrate how this was put into practice as she began to be aware of the way she sometimes reacted or responded to the children’s behaviour. Sometimes she had realised that their lack of co-operation was to do with their own need for fun. Instead of becoming annoyed she tried to appeal to the children for help:

I really need some co-operation, I’ve got an appointment at two o’clock and we’ve got five minutes’. Then it’s much more coming together for the team work thing rather than me being like the big bad mum wielding the stick
(Laura M P: 4).

Laura went on to explain how starting to practice using these new tools had ‘shifted her position on parenting’ and summed up her current hopes and aspirations for her children in the following quotation:

I wish I could do it more, moment to moment. I still go back to the default position, but generally it's awareness. I think that my children are different to the way I was, and that they're having a very different experience. I just hope that it'll be OK. You don't have anything to go on; it's a road less travelled in a way...I just really want them to have a strong sense of themselves. By the time they get to adulthood to be really grounded in themselves and to be respectful and considerate to other people but not to the point that they infringe upon their own wants and desires, the needs that they have (Laura M P: 2).

The idea of parents and children sharing a more equal relationship seems to be key to Laura's newfound self-identity:

You're kind of on an equal, but I think that if you give up on disciplining then you're giving up, and the kids are in charge; it's finding that hand in hand process. I've never been a parent before and so lets work it out together for everybody (Laura M P: 2).

Like Hannah in the previous exemplar, Laura also spoke about a default position that was deeply embedded in society. This was referred to as both a position of the past, but also as continuity within contemporary society. This default position seemed to be understood in a way that is explained by James and James (2004). That is, a position in which the social space childhood occupies is deemed to be a natural temporal space that is biologically determined and also a generational space in which laws and other structures within society separate out children from adults. Within the context of this culturally embedded view of children and childhood that allows adults and children different levels of agency and different rights according to current law; both Laura's and Hannah's narratives illustrate a quest for a more democratic

style of family life in which children are afforded greater agency, and where there is a sense of reciprocity amongst adult and child family members.

Laura used the imagery of a battle to describe the way she perceived herself to be 'fighting' against the default position, often having 'slip moments' when this was not achieved. It was this 'fight' that is captured in the idea of quest.

Towards the end of the interview I asked Laura to share with me her views on current Scottish legislation about parents' use of smacking, and the possibility that the law might act as a driver for change, in other words, to shift the default position. Laura agreed that although state intervention was intended to be helpful, she had reservations about the role of the 'nanny state', saying that she believed that smacking could become a closeted activity and that children who are at risk would not benefit. Instead, Laura believed changing attitudes was a long slow evolutionary process, which possibly takes place over generations and that at a micro level it began with her and was passed on to her children and those they subsequently came into contact with over their life course.

Laura ended her narrative with her metaphor for the process of change in society over subsequent generations, as she likened it to the ever-increasing circles of the ripple effect when a pebble is dropped into a pool of water.

As Laura re-constructed her own identity as a parent she came to a point of restitution. All three of Frank's narrative types are features in Laura's story. The story commenced with chaos and confusion, a period in which Laura was unhappy with how she felt about herself as a parent. Following a turning point at

a crucial moment in time, Laura began a quest for parenting tools that were to enable personal restitution brought about by a new understanding of the relationship she had with her children.

Reflecting upon Laura's narrative, it seems clear that Laura felt very alone in her quest for 'tools along the way' to help her to engage in a more mindful way with her children. Laura's perception that health visitors support the 'default position' is somewhat discomfoting. It suggests there is a need to offer parenting support that enables parents to develop a toolkit of skills that foster sensitive parenting, with all families regardless of socio-economic status. For example, the Solihull Approach to supporting parenting, reported to be used by some health visitors in Fife, is underpinned in part by the concept of reciprocity as a way to develop attachment and thereby sensitive parenting (Sanders and Turner 2005). Understandings of reciprocity amongst children and parents challenge traditional functionalist ideas about socialisation as a unidirectional process (James and James 2004). Instead, within this alternative way of understanding socialisation, there is recognition of children's agency, not in an individualistic kind of way, but as part of a two-way relationship in which reciprocity is valued.

The notion that parents can learn from listening to and by observing babies and children is considered to be fundamental to ideas of reciprocity. Advocates of such approaches, suggest that these kinds of interventions should be included as part of a range of public health initiatives designed to safeguard children and to support families (Barlow 2010)

7:4 RESTITUTION NARRATIVES

The following two exemplars have been selected to illustrate the narrative type, restitution. The first of these narratives culminates with the recounting of an event that was described as hugely symbolic and which I have interpreted as being an act that was symbolic of restitution. In the second of these 'restitution' exemplars, the narrator used powerful language to describe her quest and eventual restitution.

7:4:1 Exemplar Five: Janice's Narrative: Banning the Bomb and Burning the Belt

Janice is the mother of Hannah and thereby also a grandmother (See exemplar 3). I met with Janice at her own home on the Scottish mainland and my attention was immediately drawn to a poster displayed in the window at the front of her house, 'Say No To Trident!'

During the course of our conversation Janice reinforced what I had perceived to be her identity, as a political activist and campaigner for human rights: the identity that seemed to be projected by the poster. Janice explained how her personal ideology about human rights influenced her views about the use of physical punishment on children. She began by relating events of her childhood, her experience as a schoolteacher and also as a parent. Her story culminated in the recounting of an event that was to act as a powerful icon of restitution.

Janice described her experience of growing up in a household where despite her mother's protestations; the use of the belt by her father was not unusual, especially with her brother. Janice remembered hearing her parents arguing following an instance when her asthmatic brother had been hit by her father, and hearing her mother shout, "don't you ever hit my child again, I'll never forgive you if you hit my child again". Janice also recalled a time when on another occasion, after being cheeky to her father, he had 'whacked' her across the face with the back of his hand. Janice went on to explain the effects of being a recipient of physical punishment, and the mediatory role of her mother:

It wasn't the physical hurt that I hated; it was so humiliating. The effect upon me was to respect him even less. I think that my father would have beaten us a lot more if my mother hadn't taken the position that she did (Janice M G: 1).

Janice went on to describe her experience as a student teacher, at a time when the use of the tawse², was commonplace in Scottish schools:

There was me, a student teacher refusing to go to the belting lesson. It was never a question of shall I or shall I not go, I just knew that there was a very profound principle here (Janice M G: 2).

Janice eventually managed to get a teaching position in a school where even before legislative change; the use of corporal punishment had been banned.

Janice went on to describe tensions experienced as a parent. On one hand she staunchly believed the use of smacking on children was a barbaric act of

² The tawse was used in Scottish schools until the use of corporal punishment in state schools was outlawed in 1986. The tawse was a strap with a number of tails at one end. It was obtainable either as a medium, heavy or extra duty strap. In 1982 its monopoly manufacturer in Scotland, Lochgelly saddler John Dick, went out of production due to problems of supply of the correct grade of saddle leather.

bullying that is part of the 'cultural baggage' and yet at the same time was able to recall particular instances when she has used physical punishment with her son. The following story was given by way of example:

I've remembered something else that I've always been terribly ashamed of. I took the children to the theatre and I had bought sweets. This was at a time when my financial situation was dire, so the theatre tickets and the sweets were a great extravagance ... Jerry was sitting beside me; the opera started and he kept saying to me, 'can I have another sweetie?' I was going 'shhh', but my little boy wouldn't shut up and kept on asking me noisily for a sweet. I still can't believe that I did this, but I took his hand and I dug my fingernails into the palm of his hand. I don't know, it must have been a combination of, er, I don't know, the people behind saying shush. I could have just given him the sweets, but my, 'you don't just shovel down sweets to children was in operation'. So I think that I was in this enormous dilemma that I couldn't control. It must have been sore when I did it, but it didn't hurt him. I remember thinking afterwards, 'what a terrible thing to do'. I don't know if he remembers, I've never asked. I've always remembered it; the way I disciplined my son at the opera (Janice M G: 7).

This story provides an illustration of dissonance between attitude and behaviour and was a 'story' that was repeated by other participants. Ideas about dissonance, aporia and apparent contradictions are of methodological interest in relation to narrative and are discussed further in the final chapter of this thesis. With no prompting from me (the listener and researcher), Janice reflected upon this apparent contradiction:

It's interesting actually because amongst all of this about disciplining my children, there was another thing going on. I've always had strong opinions about rights in different contexts, partly as a single parent and partly because of who I am I suppose (Janice M G: 10).

Janice continued her narrative with more general discussion about the nature of smacking. For example, Janice strongly believed that if smacking was regarded by society as a violent act then parents may be less likely to use it as a form of discipline and that over time society's collective response would be intolerance. Janice drew comparisons with the way in which sexual harassment, once unlikely to be reported, today is not tolerated. Janice went on to explain she believed that although there are limitations to the use of legislation that deem the use of smacking by parents to be unacceptable, it may empower children to speak up about their experiences.

Restitution for Janice came about in two different ways. Firstly, this was achieved through inter-generational change. Janice looked back on her own experience as a recipient of physical punishment by a parent who seemed to regard this as a legitimate act at a time in our history when this behaviour was normative:

My father was a teacher and he was a belter. I think that he belted a lot; he didn't give it any thought (Janice M G: 11).

As a parent, Janice held strong views that the use of physical punishment of children was an act of violence and should not be tolerated, while at the same time when experiencing stress this belief was not always borne out in practice. Although Janice stated she believed herself to be more tolerant of her children's behaviour than most people of her generation, she observed her daughter Hannah was even more tolerant with her children. Janice explained although there was change over three generations within her family, she also believed

that there were similarities between her mother, herself and her daughter. What was different was their levels of tolerance or the limits or boundaries that they set for their children's behaviour, with each subsequent generation of mothers having a greater level of tolerance. In another way, restitution has been brought about by Janice's perception of herself as a positive role model for her children.

Towards the end of the interview, Janice said that she would like to tell me one more story. This was a story that was to link the past with the present, one generation with another in an act that symbolised the erasure of the actions of the past. Janice commenced this story by reiterating that her father's position on the use of the belt was immovable, "he had his position and I had mine. I hated the fact that's what he did". She went on to say:

Hannah and Jerry found his belt at the back of the garage, and they didn't tell me and they cut it up and burnt it. I was delighted. I don't think that we ever told him. I don't know how they cut it up because those belts were so thick. It was a ritual thing; they were so gleeful. It was heavily symbolic. There you are (Janice M G: 11).

The final words, 'there you are,' not only signalled that this was the end of the interview, but also that this symbolised an end to an era, the past had been dealt with.

7:4:2 Exemplar Six: Joni's Narrative: Ending the Cycle of Bad Mothers

This narrative has been selected as an exemplar since within the whole, chaos, quest and restitution narratives types can be identified. However, for me the

interpreter, ideas of restitution were dominant. There are similarities between this narrative and that of Janice's in the previous exemplar, in the way that both accounts focus upon setting aright the past and forging a model for the future by way of restitution. At the same time, the purpose of the telling of these narratives by the participants serves to present a moral self as a 'good mother'.

Joni, a mother of two children, currently a single parent living in the south of Scotland began her narrative by describing significant events in her childhood that she believed had been crucial to her identity as a child and as a young person. Joni began by explaining that both she and her brother were adopted as infants and as an older child aged nine she was sent to boarding school. Her mother was described as rather a cold character emotionally and also the disciplinarian. According to Joni her father reluctantly meted out any physical punishment at her mother's request on his return from work.

Joni summed up her childhood relationship with her mother by saying, "my experience of a nurturing relationship was pretty much not there" (Joni M P: 3). As a child Joni was expected to unquestioningly obey adults in authority such as parents and teachers. She had no sense of personal autonomy or confidence in her ability to make decisions about her own life. She summed this up as follows:

That whole experience of childhood; I came out with no sense of who I was
(Joni M P: 3).

As an adult Joni experienced domestic violence at the hand of her partner who was also the father of her first child. Following her 'escape' [sic] she spent some

time 'looking over her shoulder' fearful that she might be found by her ex partner. Joni recalled that although these events were terrifying at the time she was able to view them positively in retrospect, saying that this was "the making of me". She had learned self-sufficiency skills and learned to be more confident in her every day decision making.

These biographical accounts provide the context for what appeared to be Joni's quest. Joni identified herself as "coming from a long line of bad mothers". This was a theme she returned to during the course of the interview. Her mission was to break the cycle of bad mothers and to achieve restitution.

In a similar way to both Hannah, and Laura (exemplars three and four), Joni referred to violence as being deeply embedded within society and explained that when under stress she sometimes reverted to, "the behaviour that had been ingrained in me". This was an aspect of behaviour she didn't like and was regretful of. On one hand Joni seems to attempt to justify her actions by saying, "I didn't know any other way to be", but also uses this idea to present herself in her narrative as a 'bad mother', another in the "long line of bad mothers".

Joni gave an example of an event that was one of a number of triggers she explained as being instrumental in her quest for 'the good mother'. She described a situation when she was out shopping; her baby buggy carried the shopping and her daughter as a toddler, walked alongside. Just as they were about to cross the road, her daughter ran towards the road:

I just yelled at her, y'know as you do, and grabbed her and put her into the buggy and quite roughly strapped her in. This little boy, he can't have been more than nine or ten, turned round and said to me, 'that's not very nice,

she didn't do anything wrong'. I thought, 'you're right, what a brilliant kid'. It made me stop and think, 'no, that's not the way to behave' (Joni M P: 5).

Joni described this event as one of many "little nudges", which had made her reconsider the way that she acted out her mothering role. Joni also found it significant that in this situation it was a child who had provided this trigger. This was congruent with her philosophy of the need for children to be allowed agency; children should not be positioned simply as empty vessels to be shaped by the efforts of adults since they can also take on the role of 'teacher'.

Like Janice in the previous exemplar, Joni looked to the past, to the previous generation. Her birth mother and her adoptive mother were cited as 'bad mothers'. Joni's personal quest was to be a 'good mother' and positive role model in order that this might also be fulfilled in her daughter, who at the age of sixteen was pregnant.

Ideas about what constitutes a 'good mother' change over time and are context bound (May 2008). Both Janice and Joni constructed the 'good mother' as one who allows children freedom to take risks, to make decisions for themselves and at the same time to feel free to communicate without fear of criticism or punishment. This is a style of parenting which in essence is both tolerant and permissive. It was these markers or criteria that Joni used to confirm her now identity as a good mother in this moral presentation of self:

I feel now that I've broken the long line of dreadful mothers. I hope so. I mean, I don't think of myself as perfect because that's a ridiculous illusion anyway. I know that Lisa will come and speak to me about anything. You

know she tells me if she's been doing drugs and if she's been drinking. And instead of coming out with all of those hype things about drugs I say, 'yeh, sure, I tried them all, just watch it; these are the things that you need to watch out for' (Joni M P: 9).

The ideas of restitution were not confined to personal restitution, but serve also to connect the past generation with the future. Frank's analysis of restoration narratives (Frank 1995) focuses upon the restitution of the individual; however, the process of restitution seems to be understood by these participants as a mechanism for intergenerational transition.

7:5 SUMMARY

The concept of *transition* has provided a useful lens for exploring, analysing and explaining key narrative types found within the selected narrative exemplars. The idea of transition acts as a place where personal stories of transition; chaos, quest and restitution, and experiences of different contexts of change as discovered in the themes found across the narrative data intersect with ideas about the social world in transition that were represented in the print media. Analysis of narratives when considered in their entirety enabled another layer of interpretation that built upon what was discovered in the previous stages of interpretation. Moving on from participants' experience of turning points, triggers, evolution and preservation prompted more detailed scrutiny of how these experiences of transition were contextualised within a whole biography.

Although Frank's typology of transition provided a lens with which to scrutinise experience, the states of chaos, quest and restitution were found to be

temporal. Just as Frank (1995) found when analysing stories about illness, I too have found that the use of a dominant narrative type did not preclude another being interwoven amongst the threads of the whole story as narrators moved to and fro between the past and present, between past experience of childhood and the present as parents.

Ideas about relationship were always at the forefront of participants' narratives; relationship between parents and children and also the relationship of parents and children with a changing social world. Within participants' narratives smacking was not considered as an isolated aspect of behaviour in an abstract way but instead as part of a story of change in child parent relationship. For example, despite the diversity of individual social circumstances of Tracy, Joni, Janice, Laura and Hannah (see narrative exemplars), the realisation of reciprocity in adult - child relationships, the experience of learning from each other and valuing the others contribution in the kind of way that is described by Mayall (2001) and earlier by O'Neill (1994) characterised new expectations of what it is to be a child and what it is to be a parent. Within these biographical narratives valuing reciprocity was part of the experience of intergenerational change.

Within parent-child relationships where reciprocity was engendered, there was recognition of children as 'differently equal', to adopt an expression adopted by Bjerke (2011). Understandings of children as 'differently equal' according to Bjerke, helps to formulate what reciprocity might entail for parents and children, particularly regarding children's participation and responsibilities:

The equality that children and young people strive for is defined by adults recognising how children are different in specific contexts by giving them the necessary provision and protection to 'be and become' responsible beings and participate in the sense of 'doing responsible things as children (Bjerke 2011).

When children are positioned as differently equal, a middle way is reached that bridges polarised perspectives viewing children as either competent with rights to participation or on the other hand, as lacking the experience needed to be competent.

Some participants' narratives (for example, those of Laura, Hannah and Joni), seem to indicate, in a way that is ahead of the policy makers and campaigners at the time of interview, their quest for a new kind of relationship as parents with children. The nature of reciprocal relationships according to participants in this doctoral study included; children's needs for nurturing to enable them to have opportunity to learn how to do responsible things, to ascertain risk for instance (see Hannah's narrative account) and to use negotiation (see Laura's narrative account); mindful parenting that included listening to children and being prepared to learn from them. Notions of reciprocity and perspectives of children as equally different, for participants in the current doctoral study, supported values about children's human rights not to be physically disciplined. However, for these participants, a change in the law to ban all smacking by parents was not necessarily regarded as helpful due to issues about enforcement and the belief that there is a need to support parents rather than to criminalise them. Instead, the vision for the future for Laura Joni and Hannah was that cultural change would take place by 'ripple effect', one generation of parents after

another, as described previously within Laura's narrative. These parents sought tools along the way that were likely to help them to fulfil the self-identity of their quest.

For Carol (I P HV), a more traditional parenting role of guiding, nurturing and educating children that was in accordance with preserved island cultural norms was understood to be fundamental to understanding parent-child relationship. This stance, emphasising the need for children to respect adults, as those able to give guidance and enable children to reach completion as moral adult citizens within society, positions children as vulnerable in need of safeguarding but seems to marginalise their participation rights.

The stance taken by Carol has resonance with current government rhetoric and policy making. James and James (2004) argued that the policy agenda within New Labour's³ philosophy of Communitarianism would result in the continuing control of adults over children rather than democratisation of the family. The relationship between the individual and the state and more specifically in relation to the topic of the current study, the relationship of parents and the state is considered crucial in order to meet the state's communitarian agenda. According to James and James (2004) ideas of the family as a control mechanism of the state are concealed within policy rhetoric of child welfare. Accordingly, adults within the family are seen as being in need of support while children are positioned as in need of protection and without recognition of their

³ The Labour Party was in government at Westminster from 1997 until 2010 when a coalition government between The Conservative Party and The Liberal Democratic Party was elected. New Labour's philosophy of Communitarianism seems to share similarities with Conservative ideology of 'The Big Society' (Conservative Party Manifesto April 2010). It is too early to comment upon the implications of this for the cultural politics of childhood.

agency as persons. This continuing polemic of agency and protection is illustrated within the current legal framework. James and James (2004) draw attention to a paradox within the law:

The law...as a giver of rights does have potential to acknowledge the child as a social actor, a person with agency, although as a provider of protection, it can also deny that agency (James and James 2004, p.211).

It could be argued that one of the reasons why laws to ban parents' use of smacking were not passed by either the Westminster government or the Scottish government, was because if parents are part of a control mechanism of the state, then they need to be able to use smacking as a way to control children. In other words, it is a necessary tool to enable parents to carry out their socially prescribed role.

As James and James (2004) assert, a minority of adults support the use of the law to give rights to children, while a majority of adults regard the law as the means by which children are afforded care and protection. An alternative way, however, has been proposed by the NSPCC (2010). This position does not regard children's rights to participation and a need for care and protection as mutually exclusive. Instead, being equally human, children should be afforded equal protection from assault.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) suggest that identity, far from being static over a lifetime, is instead relational and dynamic. Changes in identity are influenced by 'social and contextual interactions and by inner processes within the individual'.

This seems to be borne out in the interpretation of these narrative interviews in the examples given previously. The evolutionary process of transition or response to an external trigger and the idea of a personal turning point work to transform identity through processes that involve chaos, quest and restitution.

Furthermore, Reissman (2002) argued that narrators perform a preferred identity during the interaction of the interview and this allows the researcher to consider or to interpret the social position of the narrator. According to Reissman, two different social positions may be presented, that of agency and that of passivity. On reflection, Reissman's approach has resonance with interpretation of the narrative exemplars presented in this chapter. For example, those participants who describe their quest as parents demonstrate agency. For Laura, Hannah and Joni, who seem to describe themselves carving out a new path as parents, which was perceived to be one in opposition to the embedded position within society; this demonstration of agency went beyond the present but also on into the future as they sought to influence the following generation, the ripple effect. In a slightly different way, Tracy, following her period of 'chaos' when events seemed to be beyond her control was able to demonstrate agency in that she described the way in which following timely support from a family worker she felt more in control of her situation and was looking forward to a more positive future.

Passivity as described by Reissman, was harder to find in the narrative exemplars. There are however, parallels with the sense of moving along with

the tide of change passively, that was labelled *evolution* in the thematic analysis (Chapter Six).

It occurs to me too, that as part of the dialogical performance that is the interview, the researcher also performs a preferred identity, which is interpreted by the narrator and that may influence what is told and how it is told. For instance, contradictions in narrative accounts may occur when the researcher is perceived to hold a different viewpoint from the narrator; the sharing of an emotionally sensitive event, or one that may potentially invite criticism may only happen if the researcher is perceived to be an empathetic non-judgemental person.

In the final chapter of this thesis, ideas that were iteratively derived from each stage of analysis, from part one and part two of the study, are reconciled.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BIG STRUCTURES, LARGE PROCESSES AND SMALL STORIES

8:1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter interpretations of the findings from the two parts of the study, print media narratives and participants narratives, are synthesised and thereby reconciled. The way in which the findings have helped to answer the research question is explained and thereby, the contribution this study makes to knowledge and understanding about the social construction of smacking and the way in which parents, grandparents and health visitors have responded to a changing discourse:

How do parents', grandparents' and health visitors' narratives diverge or converge with societal narratives about the use of smacking by parents in the UK?

I have 'borrowed' the title of this chapter from Charles Tilly, the late American sociologist who was author of a book published with a similar title, 'Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons' (Tilly 1984). One of the recommendations that Tilly made, was that researchers who use narrative methodologies should not in their focus upon the everyday lives of individuals, that is, the small stories of ordinary events, neglect to consider huge structures within society and the often powerful discourses that are generated and maintained (Tilly 1984). For Tilly, the narratives of individuals, collective action

such as that by pressure groups, and wider social processes are interlinked. Accordingly, it is these interactions, which allow the development of collective movements for social change and also influence fundamental changes in the way ideas about identity are formulated. Tilly's ideas about the connections between every day small stories and big structures help to reconcile the interpretation of all of the findings within the current study. How interaction between societal discourse, as represented in the print media for example and individuals' understandings of experience in the past and in the present, mediated by memory, work towards forming and transforming moral identity and hence parenting practice, is central to this thesis. How I interpreted the findings from the different parts of the study and made connections between one stage of analysis and the next by iteratively going between the literature and the findings is summarised in this chapter.

Sequential analysis of print media texts and the different approaches to analysing participant's narratives, one stage feeding into the next has moved discussion on from consideration of the way in which smacking has been defined and conceptualised over time, to something fundamental to human existence, that of relationship. Returning to Cartier-Bresson's idea of the 'Decisive Moment', used in the methodology chapter of the current thesis (p.102) as an analogy for the narrative interview, Cartier-Bresson in the taking of a photograph sought to capture something essential in a single image of an unfolding drama and said in the introduction to his book of photographs:

I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph; of some situation that was unravelling itself before my eyes' (Cartier-Bresson 1952 p1).

In a similar kind of way, capturing the whole essence of a story that was being unravelled in the narrative account was one of the aims of the interviewing approach. Participants' narratives that have been explored in this doctoral study suggest this sort of drama is taking place in our society. It is one in which parents, who having experienced different kinds of transitions during their lifecourse, are re-negotiating or transforming their identities in a way that fundamentally changes parent-child relationship. Participants did not generally consider physical punishment of children in isolation; instead it was included more holistically within a range of issues related to parenting and the cultural politics of childhood.

Analysis of print media texts and structural analysis of participant's narratives (see Chapters Four and Five), which explored the way in which smacking was conceptualised as either a legitimate disciplinary tool for parents that in the long term is not harmful, or as an act of violence that contravened children's human rights for equal protection against assault, laid the foundations for discovering participants experience of transition (see Chapter Six). Through diverse experiences of transition; triggers, turning points and evolution, participants described how this culminated in identity transformation, underpinned by recognition of children's social position as participants and a need to foster relationships of reciprocity between parents and children (see Chapter Seven).

Ways in which O'Neill's (1994) 'covenant theory', with its key concepts of recognition and reciprocity, intersects with ideas about 'big structures, large processes and small stories' is explored in relation to the study findings and in the following chapter, its implications for practice and policy.

8:2 PRINT MEDIA NARRATIVE, COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND BIOGRAPHY

Analysis of print media narratives provided a useful starting place for exploring change and continuity in societal discourse about parents' use of smacking over a twenty year period by examining a selection of UK newspapers published in the years 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004. Media discourse takes place within diverse social and political contexts. The changing discourse represented in these print media narratives featured both similarities and differences when compared to the language used, definitions of smacking and emergent narrative threads within participants' biographical narratives. Analysis of print media texts was used to provide a lens on the social and cultural context of smacking in the UK.

8:2:1 Responding to a changing media template

Within the print media, smacking was conceptualised in a number of different ways. Study participants' narratives seem to indicate that they have responded in different ways to societal discourse, such as that found within print media narratives. Kitzinger (1998) suggests that audiences adopt one of three positions in their response to media messages. They may either agree with the dominant message, reject it on political or cultural grounds or they may refine

elements of it according to previously held views. Within this doctoral study, parallel themes to those found in the print media texts about the social consequences of lack of parental discipline (physical discipline), children's rights, the effectiveness of smacking and the role of the state in family life, were also threaded through some participants' narratives (as described in chapters five and six). As Kitzynger's theory suggests, some participants rejected ideas about the use of smacking or other forms of physical punishment as a moral imperative, on ideological grounds that position children first and foremost as human beings with equal rights to protection as adults. While other participants refined elements of cultural knowledge of the past. By this I mean, those parents that adopted this stance, while recognising that smacking children was no longer considered acceptable, 'not politically correct', made adjustments by adding a proviso; a wee tap or smack to remind of danger, or to enforce a ruling on safety, or if a child had been warned but had broken the boundaries of behaviour set by parents then a smack legitimately reinforced the warning. In this way, these participants had refined what was once culturally acceptable, parental use of smacking per se, and instead adopted it as a second line tactic, justified, as it was perceived to keep children out of physical or moral danger.

8:2:2 Wee Smacks and Taps Revisited

Interpretation of the way that language was used to define smacking and other forms of corporal punishment in the print media has parallels with that used within participants' interviews, discovered by a process of structural analysis. To recap, it was identified in both print media accounts and within participants narratives that the use of terms such as 'wee smack', or smack rather than hit

may serve to trivialise what may be regarded as a violent act, a form of assault, thereby rendering the issue as one of little significance. Moreover, it was only in narrative accounts that supported the view that smacking is a form of assault, that the term hitting was used to describe what other participants, those who believed smacking to be a legitimate parenting tool, termed smacking. Secondly, it was only when participants were referring to events of the past that they used the language found within comic books, 'whack', 'biff', for example. When describing situations as parents rather than smacked children of the past, less emotive terms were used, such as a 'wee tap'. This different use of language, intergenerationally and over time to describe corporal punishment is evidence of a changing social discourse. What is significant about this for parents is the way in which definitions of smacking intersect with ideas about moral identity as a parent and with understandings of relationship amongst parents and children.

8:2:3 Generation and Memory

Cultural productions such as literature, visual media and print media reflect and influence cultural change and may be regarded as examples of 'big structures'. The archiving of events recorded in the print media contributes to cultural memory (Nelson 2003). These preserved recordings of situations, events and comment upon such events, resonate with our past and present and allow a 'look back in time' to 'the way we (human beings) were' and to make comparisons with 'where we are now'. The media's preserved written record of events has parallels with participants' stories as they too, in their look back in time, drawing on memories of childhoods of the previous generation and their

own generation continuously made comparisons, in order to explain understandings of smacking and how relationships between children and adults was experienced.

Nelson (2003) theorises that personal autobiographical memory is structurally and functionally related to social and cultural memory and that this relationship is brought about by narrative. Personal autobiographical narratives through the act of telling the story, contribute to the development of a shared narrative that is underpinned by experiences (episodic knowledge) and understood within the context of culture at a particular point in time. The function of autobiographical memory according to Nelson (2003) is to provide a sense of continuity that enables access to time past, the present and on into the future: how things have been and how things should be. Similarly, Garro (2000) describes shared cultural understandings as a form of collective memory, that through re-telling the narrative in different contexts and at different times, brings about change.

Print media representation of smacking portrayed a changing discourse over time, with more recent articles conceptualising smacking as a children's rights issue rather than in relation to its effectiveness or consequences for children and society. Participants' responses to changing social discourse about smacking were varied. There were sometimes tensions, contradictions or aporias in participants' narratives that might be explained in the light of changing understandings of smacking. These tensions within narrative accounts are of methodological interest for research and are considered in the following section.

8:2:4 The Unsayable, Contradictions And Aporias In Narrative Accounts: Responses To a Changing Social Discourse

The term *aporia*, according to Allen (1995) is a figure of speech referring to 'that which is impassable', or is a logical contradiction. Watson (2008) uses the idea of *aporia* in narratives to explain the point of tension existing between the societal narrative that is historically and socially constructed and personal narrative. The tension, according to Watson (2008) is at the heart of the construction of self-identity. The tension that is created for individuals by the going between the societal narrative and the personal story helps to explain what appeared to be conflicting accounts. For example, like some of the other health visitor participants, Judith, a mainland health visitor, at one point in her narrative explained that she sometimes smacked her own children but would promote alternative discipline strategies with the parents she worked with. Within the telling of her narrative she discursively 'toggles'⁴ her position as a health visitor and her position as a parent. The *aporia* or tension is created by conflict between societal discourse about smacking that is in a state of flux, the position of the health visitor and professional organisation that supports a ban on smacking by parents and her personal position as a parent. It is possible that this sort of 'toggling' within narratives happens when individuals and societies are in transition and where the construction of identity within one role is in conflict with construction of identity within another role.

⁴ To 'toggle': the toggle is a computing key that alternately switches function on and off (Oxford Dictionary 1997).

Rogers et al (1999, p77) add to this discussion in what they describe as 'conceptions of the said and not said'. Rogers et al (1999) argue what is not said may be unsayable for a variety of reasons and that looking at this negativity within research interviews allows 'the unsayable to speak' (Rogers et al 1999, p79). One of the challenges for interpreting the 'not said' is the imbalance of power between the researcher and the narrator and this may contribute to what was unsayable in the narrative interviews within the current study and what I came to think of as the 'not smack'.

The 'not smack' is an example of a 'language of negation' (Rogers et al (1999, p.93) and includes instances when participants said they were never smacked by their parents, and then go onto describe a time when they were smacked as in Cathie's (I HV) narrative. Alternatively, a claim is made that they have never smacked their child then go on to describe an event in which they smacked as in Carol's (I P HV) narrative. For Cathie (I HV), that she was smacked as a child did not sit comfortably with the notion of the idyllic childhood that she sought to convey, possibly in the belief that for me the researcher, smacking could not be part of an idyllic childhood. This is what Goffman (1971) referred to as the 'front stage' presentation. It is this mismatch that creates an aporia.

In a similar kind of way for Carol (I P HV, Exemplar One, Chapter Seven), that she had smacked her daughter was initially unsayable as she also positioned herself in relation to me the researcher and social context. Carol's social identity as a smacking parent was in conflict with her self-identity as a non-

smacking parent. The moving from one position to the other within Carol's narrative interview is where the aporia is created.

One of the tasks for the researcher that is not so easily achieved, is to be allowed 'back stage', to gain an understanding of what has gone on before, strategies and negotiations that might have included other actors and that are crucial to the 'front stage' performance (Gardner 2001). Gardener problematises forgetfulness, probable lies and untruths told within qualitative interviews and locates the issue in a discussion about the nature of memory. Gardner, drawing on the work of Clifford (1989) states memory is dynamic with the content changing in relation to engagement with the social world. Within the context of episodic or biographical narrative interviewing, rather than semi-structured interviewing there is greater opportunity for the narrator to weave their story. Nelson's (2003) ideas about remembering may help to explain aporias or tensions and what at a first reading appear to be contradictions within some participants' narratives (see p. 282). The narrator may move to and fro returning to events that happened at different points in time, adding to and clarifying the significance of these events during the course of the interview. It could be argued that in listening to an autobiographical narrative in which the speaker is given free reign, the researcher or listener is more likely to be able to interpretively suggest possible explanations for 'unreliable' memories as it is possible that a few more clues are left behind.

Rather than viewing these 'shifting sands of memory' as a methodological problem, it should be regarded as another way of looking at the way meanings

are constructed and reconstructed intergenerationally and intragenerationally. In the telling of their story, participants reconstruct identity as they move between the past and previously held ideas or values to present day social contexts and cultural understandings. By this I do not mean that in the narrative interviews (conducted in the current study), participants decided at that moment to cease to use smacking and thereby become non- smacking parents, but instead through the act of recounting their story and in making connections with the past, emergent identity (as a good parent for example) was conveyed.

Rather than thinking of these languages of negation and tensions within narrative accounts as contradictions, the idea of aporia, or *logical contradiction* helps to shed light upon what is not said and in understanding individual's construction and reconstruction of identity that is part of a process of transition, a response to changing social discourse. Furthermore, rather than considering these memories as unreliable, instead, that such 'contradictions' are present in the narratives, affirm their credibility in a more realistic way than the 'perfect' story might: this is what it is to be human and to tell a human story.

One of the challenges and what is also an exciting aspect of exploring issues about the use of physical punishment on children, is that this story is incomplete: it is ever unfolding and changing as ideas about what is normative become embedded, disturbed and re-embedded over generations through processes that operate at societal level and at the more micro or individual level.

Mayall's (2000) ideas about the concept of generation are relevant to this doctoral thesis. Firstly, in the sense that attitudes and beliefs about parents' use of smacking are bound up in a generations' experience of events in the past: what have been dominant perspectives on child rearing and ideas about relationships between children and adults as social groups have contributed to how smacking has been conceptualised over time. Secondly, generation has been a useful way to link the past with the present through the analysis of biographical narratives. Lastly, the concept of generation provides a connection between the different parts of this study. The following table is a development of the timeline presented previously in Chapter One p.10 and serves to illustrate how generation in terms of this study's participants, interfaces with political and social events.

Table Six. Timeline: History, Media Voices and Generation

Year	<u>HISTORICAL EVENTS</u>
1967	The Criminal Justice Act prohibited the use of corporal punishment as a sentence by the courts.
1986	The use of corporal punishment prohibited in all state schools.
1995	All use of corporal punishment within the family should be prohibited in the UK (UNCRC).
1998	Corporal punishment prohibited in private schools in England and Wales. The European Court of Human Rights found the beating with a cane of a boy by his stepfather in breach of the boy's human rights. Previously the defense of the UK Court had been that of 'reasonable chastisement'.
2000	The use of corporal punishment was prohibited in private Schools in Scotland
2001	End all Corporal Punishment of Children global initiative was launched
2003	The use of corporal punishment by childminders and in day nurseries was prohibited in England and Wales The concept of 'justifiable assault' introduced in Scotland (section 51, Criminal Justice Scotland Act). Blows to the head, shaking or use of implements no longer considered justifiable with children below sixteen years of age
2004	England and Wales Section 58 of the Children Act (2004) amended. Parents able to justify common assault of their children as "reasonable punishment" but not in relation to more serious assault charges.
2008	UNCRC urged UK governments to prioritise prohibition of all corporal punishment in the family and repeal all legal defences, such as 'justifiable assault'

The Independent.October

It's absolute piffle to say that smacking children teaches them that using violence is OK. Children need the security of knowing they have a mother who is bigger and stronger than they are, and who is in control. (Rodwell 1989 October 4th p.27).

The Daily Record.

A parent must have the right to spank. Most people do it at the time the child misbehaves. That relieves the pressure on poor mum and tells the child it's wrong. Smacking is alright as long as the punishment fits the crime. But, I'm totally against violence against children (Walker. 1994. December 15th p44).

The Independent

Anti-smacking legislation goes one step along the way to agreeing that children like adults have the right not to be hit. If we are afraid of ambiguity, then let there be none; let us simply outlaw all violence against kids. (Aaronovitch. 1999. May 21st p3)

The Sun

I grew up in an era of smacking and it didn't do me any harm. Maybe if today's yobs had a clip round the ear as they were growing up we would not have the violence and vandalism that we have today (Barrett 2004 July 9th)

The Daily Telegraph

It means substituting the discretion of the state for your discretion (smacking, snacking, smoking, hunting, you name it) (Johnson 2004 July 8th p22)

The Independent

Acknowledgement of childcare for the development of children and measures to improve maternity and paternity rights, all flag up the governments (at times too coercive) involvement in what was once the private business of the family. Help is increasingly available and it's beginning to make a difference. (Roberts 2004 May 20th p39)

LIFE COURSE

1940's	1960's	1970's	1985	1990's	2000's
Janice Born (1949)	Joni Born (1960)	Janice became a Mother Hannah, Laura, Carol born (1979)	Tracey Born Joni & Carol become Mothers	Janice became a Grandmother Hannah, Laura & Tracy become Mothers	

Interestingly for narrative methodologies, since social contexts change, as do cultural understandings, what is expressed in personal stories contained within biographical narratives are in a way temporal; meanings shift in a way that is dependent upon context at the time of telling. To relate this to the current study, participants narrated their biographical stories to me at a time when attitudes towards parents' use of smacking was changing, and at a time when traditional parent and child identities are being challenged by the current generation of parents. The significance of social time for the current study is in part its influence upon memory, beliefs and behaviour, with the moral imperative to reconstruct the narrative in a way that is considered to be socially acceptable (Brownlie 2006; Ribbens McCarthy et al 2000). This I believe may help to explain some inconsistencies in participant's stories.

Mayall (2000) uses the term *generation* to describe groups of people who are born or located in the same period of social and historical time and who share similar assumptions about events that have taken place, though their individual responses and individual experience may have been different. For example, in the current study older participants had personal memories of corporal punishment in schools, while for younger participants born on the cusp of changes in disciplinary practices within schools, memories consist of the stories they have been told. These 'differing historical, political and social constellations', which are part of the present, are at the same time embedded in memory and feed on into the future. Each generation carries with it ideas rooted in the past and that over time are refined (Mayall 2000).

This sense of change over time was captured by participants such as Jill, a mainland parent, who in her narrative compared her experience of being a non-smacking parent with that of her experience of being smacked as a child (see page 267). She understood that smacking unruly children was just what parents did then and this was considered to be acceptable behaviour, unlike the present when according to Jill, smacking is regarded to be an unacceptable way to treat children. Similarly, print media discourse changed over time. The earlier print media narratives focused upon the effectiveness of smacking and whether or not it was harmful. As found within the literature discussed in the literature review within this thesis, disparate views were presented with some writers and researchers arguing that smacking is not harmful in either the short term or the long term, whilst others associated smacking with aggressive behaviour in later childhood. However, the idea that parents' use of smacking has a protective effect for society, in that without this form of parental control 'yob culture' is likely to escalate, formed a '*media template*' that persisted over the time scale of the print media narratives that were explored (Kitzinger 2000 p.61). Not surprisingly, given the persistence of this discourse, it was reiterated by some participants (for example Gwen, a mainland grandparent) in their accounts (see page 200).

This earlier discourse about the effects of smacking for society and for individuals is underpinned by a philosophical position that regards children as incomplete adults who need to be socialised by adults to ensure that they become moral adults on completion. Within this rendition of what it is to be a child, children's human rights were considered (implicitly) differently to those

conferred upon adults. I say implicitly, since discussion about children's rights was not debated in an explicit sense within the print media until more recent times; fuelled by politics and policy as legislative measures to bring about change in the legal position of parents use of smacking was debated. Small comparisons of events within a life course, as in Jill's narrative (see page 267) represents what is a huge shift in perceptions of the social positioning of children.

Throughout this study I have mentally juggled ideas about 'small' changes occurring within the lives of individuals and what this has meant for them for identity work, at the same time as situating participants stories of change within a greater tide of social change. The work of the social psychologists, Liu and Hilton (2005) provide interesting insights into the role of history in constructing group identity. Although their work in the main is about the role of historical events and notable persons in constructing the identity of nations or peoples, when children are thought of as a social group, history may help to explain how the identity of children and of parents has been constructed, noting that:

History provides us with narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. It defines a trajectory, which helps construct the essence of a group's identity (Liu and Hilton 2005 p.539).

Furthermore, Liu and Hilton (2005) suggest that 'charters' that are agreed upon by society informally, are the means by which history legitimises a society's social and political structures. By the term 'charters', Liu and Hilton are referring to 'myths' or shared beliefs about what has come to be regarded as a truth by society. In much the same way as print media representations about parents'

use of smacking tended to be voiced by opinion leaders, these 'charters' are often anchored by opinion leaders rather than by academic or professional research. In relation to the social positioning of children, the 'large process' (Tilly 1984) or the charter or myth that has positioned children as a group differently to adults as a group, works to legitimise the different way children have been regarded over time; for example, in terms of their human rights and in beliefs about their competence to make decisions that affect their future. Similarly, charters may also serve to socially construct what it is to be a good parent. Previously I referred to the challenge of exploring a societal narrative, which during the course of this study was still unfolding. Similarly, Liu and Hilton (2005) describe history as an open-ended drama in which charters are challenged and re-negotiated as subsequent generations are subject to 'differing constellations of history, social and political ideas' (Mayall 2000 p.251). One of the ways in which history as an open-ended drama can be illustrated is through the personal histories or stories of study participants who recounted their responses to change. Within these stories concepts of generation, definitions of smacking and identity intersect.

8:3 FROM DEFINITION TO TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION

In this doctoral study, transition was explored as a subjective experience as well as a social process. In the narrative exemplars discussed in chapter six, the circumstances of the process of transition were analysed in the context of a life story. The majority of participants described the complex ways in which they

began to change the way they did things with their children as they began to think differently about what it is to be a parent and what it is to be a child and their changing understanding of smacking. These complexities were interpreted within a developing framework of transition. Different events and experiences that acted as turning points or triggers or as part of a more subtle evolutionary process were identified. In addition to these stories of change, preservation as a facet of transition was also explored.

Understanding the concept of preservation as transition, allows for the possibility for change at some time in the future: it is a temporal position. In other words, preservation of past cultural norms may be the present place in the road for some participants, but in terms of transition, it could be thought of in a present continuous sense, preserving; an end point or destination that has not yet been reached.

Participants' experiences of turning points, triggers, evolution and preservation were then explored in the light of Frank's (1995) typology of transition, quest, chaos and restitution (see narrative exemplars in Chapter Seven). Participants' biographical narratives of chaos, quest and restitution, which focus upon experience of parental use of smacking over the lifecourse, illustrate ways in which different experience of transition; triggers, turning points and evolution, worked in a transformational way to reconstruct moral identity of parents and to foster relationships of reciprocity amongst children and parents. Participants' narratives that were characterised by the idea of preservation, instead

emphasised continuity with the past and preservation of a parent and child relationship that was less equal.

Both the transformed moral self identity and the preserved identity have implications for understandings of relationship between adults and children and the cultural politics of childhood that are significant for the present and on into the future. It is this very notion of reciprocity amongst children and parents that is likely to foster as cultural knowledge, equal protection against assault.

8:3:1 Recognition, Reciprocity and Responsibility

Participants' narratives of transition that were characterised by a need or desire to parent in a different kind of way to the societal 'default position' seem to illustrate a position theorised by O'Neill (1994) and explored by others (Mayall 2000; Such and Walker 2003 & Mullin 2006).

The three principles, recognition, reciprocity and responsibility when applied to relations between parents and children and parents, children and the state are intertwined. For children and adults to experience reciprocal relations, firstly, the conceptual social space that children occupy should be recognised as a political rather than exclusively a private domain. Secondly the contribution of children as a group to the social order within a 'covenant society' should also be recognised (O'Neill 1994). When recognition takes place, either within families or at the level of the state, then reciprocity amongst children and adults can be fostered.

Mayall (2000) problematises new understandings of childhood, in which children are recognised as competent actors but at the same time are controlled and subordinated. If there is agreement that interdependence or mutuality is a key facet of reciprocity, then the rights of children are of crucial importance. On one hand it is adults who have the responsibility to ensure conditions for children's rights to be honoured but at the same time children's capacity to negotiate how these conditions are constituted within families and more widely by the state needs to be understood and facilitated.

According to O'Neill, fundamental to the principle of reciprocity is recognition of obligation of one human being to another as fellow citizens and that in turn, obligation fosters a sense of moral worth. O'Neill postures, no one is excluded from obligation in a covenant society in which reciprocity is valued. Furthermore, reciprocity between generations requires responsibility to be enacted by children to parents as well as parents to children. This concept of mutuality was most clearly articulated in the narrative exemplars of Laura and Hannah (see Chapter Seven) as they talked about their quest to find a toolbox that might enable them to foster reciprocity rather than rely on the societal default position of adults being the ones in control with children occupying a subordinate position. The ways in which reciprocity was honoured for both Hannah and Laura, was in the way they recognised their children's capacity for negotiation and children's competence to be able to take account of adults' needs. Participants recognised a role for the state in fostering what they perceived to be a different way of parenting when compared to that of previous generations and what was sometimes referred to as the standard current

'cultural response' offered by some health visitors (Laura M P). While a minority of participants supported a change in the law to outlaw smacking, the majority recognised potential problems in enacting such legislation. Instead, participants seemed to prioritise the need for the state to support parents by helping them to identify a personal parenting toolbox. The constituents of a toolbox should be congruent with a position that recognises parents and children's interdependence and thereby equal social worth. Clearly there are implications for policy and health and social care practice if within a 'covenant society' parents are enabled to learn to use tools that help to foster reciprocity amongst children and adults and help parents to achieve their aspirations of what it is to be a good parent. Implications for public health policy and practice are summarised in the following final chapter.

8:4 SUMMARY

Participants' experiences of transition sit alongside and intersect with societal transition. Print media findings demonstrated the way that deeply embedded definitions of smacking that are associated with the practice of smacking are being challenged. Media discourse about parents' use of smacking changed over time. This is mirrored in participants' narratives as they looked back to the experience of previous generations and their own experience over the life course. Personal philosophies about parents' use of smacking have been contextualised with experiences at different stages of the life course and with historical and cultural contexts. It is not intended to suggest that transition happens in a unidirectional or linear way: instead the complexities of experience of childhood feed into experience of being a parent and also into the way in

which health visitors toggle the different aspects of their role, as parents and as professionals. For participants, this involved a process of looking back to the past and looking to the future, 'making measurements', comparing the self with previous generations, comparing self to perceived societal norms and values and coming to conclusions about parent and child relationship and an understanding of the social position of children.

Reflecting back on my own health visiting practice in the early 1990s at a time when in campaigning spirit, I naively considered smacking as something that one either believed to be acceptable or not on moral grounds as a children's rights issue: I had not previously considered the implications of these views for the nature of parent and child relationship. However, findings from the current doctoral study have in a sequential way, illuminated connections between definitions of smacking and the importance of transition for transformed identity and for mindful parenting that recognises children's capacity for reciprocity. As well as prompting me personally to think about smacking issues differently, these findings suggest implications for health visiting practice and policy making

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

*The end of all of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.*

(TS Elliot 1944)

9:1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this final chapter are to briefly summarise the strengths and limitations of the study and to conclude with some with some implications for future research, health visiting practice and policy making. Prior to this, the research question, study aims and overview of the key content of the previous chapters are revisited; the place where I started and where now, having embarked upon an exploratory journey feel that my understanding of the issues raised in the research question have been enlightened and that there is indeed, as TS Elliot so aptly penned, a sense of knowing this place for the first time.

9:2 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter one: Preface and Overview

The purpose of this chapter was to contextualise the thesis and to offer an insight into my personal and professional interest in the study topic. Within this first chapter, a brief history of legislative change in relation to physical punishment of children in the UK was described. The persistence of the notion

within the law of 'justifiable assault' by parents on children was argued to be a key reason for the continued acceptance over time, of smacking as an appropriate means to discipline children. The position taken by the UK government and devolved Scottish Government was compared to that of other countries who have adopted the UNCRC position that children have a right to freedom from assault and who have banned the use of smacking by parents. The brief history of the use of physical punishment on children in the UK and globally, suggested that this is a complex issue and a deeply embedded social phenomenon, which required further study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Physical Punishment of Children Conceptualised

From very early on in the review it became clear that there were two associated overarching concepts that link the different groups of literature and that were to provide a cohesive thread through the thesis narrative. The first of these relates to how smacking is defined or conceptualised and secondly how this has changed over time. The reason this is considered to be fundamental to this thesis is because shared societal understandings of smacking and individuals' definitions of smacking have potential repercussions for public health policy and practice and parenting behaviour intergenerationally and intra generationally.

The literature review usefully informed the development of the research question and the study aims. The purpose of this chapter was to distil the different ways that smacking is conceptualised. This was achieved by exploring three main categories of literature; concepts of smacking that were derived from

empirical psychological research, cultural and sociological concepts of smacking and health visitors' opinions about parents' use of smacking. The psychological literature, focusing upon experimental studies, offered disparate conclusions about the nature of smacking and the likelihood that this form of punishment caused any long or short-term harm for children or society. This body of literature defined smacking in different ways; as part of a continuum with child abuse at one extreme and smacking at the other, or as a form of discipline that could be useful within the parameters of specific conditions. The significance of the contribution of psychological research's conclusions, that smacking may be a useful back up tool for parents when used to support alternative more positive strategies, is its influence on current UK policy on parents' use of smacking.

There were two important limitations to the findings of the psychological research studies reviewed. Firstly, parents' and children's understandings of smacking within the context of everyday life were not explored and secondly, smacking was not conceptualised as a children's rights issue. This gap in knowledge prompted exploration of the second category of literature and later, the development of my research question.

Review of literature that conceptualised corporal punishment as a social phenomenon widened discussion about parents' use of smacking. The influence of structural factors such as religion, legislature and the media on parents' beliefs and practice intersected with concepts about children's rights. Placing children's rights centrally in discussion about parenting practices

allowed sociological discussion to move on to consider a fundamental issue, that of relationship and the way in which relationships between adults and children within families appear to be changing from a position that regards children as essentially unequal with adults to one that values reciprocity.

The final category of literature reviewed, focused upon the views held by health visitors about parents' use of smacking and about the use of public health approaches that aim to foster sensitive parenting.

Conclusions drawn from the literature review revealed a number of gaps in current understanding about the smacking phenomenon. Firstly, how the use of smacking has been experienced over time in the story of a life and secondly, how connections are made between the past and the present, intergenerationally and intragenerationally. Thirdly, there was paucity of research on media representation of smacking over time. A more nuanced qualitative approach was adopted to achieve the study aims and to answer the research question posed within the current doctoral study.

How do parents', grandparents' and health visitors' narratives diverge or converge with changing societal narratives about the use of smacking by parents in the UK?

The aims of this doctoral study were to discover:

1. How the print media contribute to societal discourse about parents' use of smacking.
2. The contexts of parents' and grandparents' understandings of smacking within the framework of biographical narrative.
3. How concepts of generation, reciprocity and relationship are played out within families in Scotland.
4. How health visitors make sense of smacking as professional caregivers and health promoters and also from their more personal perspective as parents or grandparents.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology chapter provided a philosophical and pragmatic rationale for the choice of qualitative methods used to collect, analyse and interpret the data used to answer the research question and to fulfil the aims of the study. Methodological issues that relate to the position of the researcher as writer, issues related to reflexivity, ethical issues and measuring 'goodness' in qualitative research were also critically considered within this chapter. On reflection, both strengths and limitations to the methodology can be identified.

Methodological Strengths

1. The use of an evolving and sequential research strategy, although time consuming, enabled me to focus upon both the form and the content of narratives. The use of different lenses or approaches to analysing narrative data, within selected narratives and across all narrative content, allowed greater

depth of interpretation. It also enabled me to reflexively consider the significance of the relationship between researcher and participant; how this may have influenced what is contained within participants' narratives and how participants' stories were recounted.

2. A further strength of this doctoral study is that biographical narrative has allowed connections to be made between experience at different stages of the lifecourse and the way in which participants have redefined meanings of smacking intragenerationally and intergenerationally. The use of narrative allowed participants to tell their stories in their own way and at their preferred pace. My experience of narrative interviewing within the current doctoral study concurs with Flick's (2006) observations; narrative methods that are relatively free from researcher interjection are more likely to allow participants to choose when to tell more sensitive stories, if at all. Thus narrative interviewing is potentially more emancipatory than other interview methods, for example, semi structured interviewing.

3. The use of *transition* as a framework for interpreting each participant's narrative has been helpful in two different ways. Firstly, in the identification of different experiences of personal transition at particular moments in time; secondly, Frank's (1995) typology of transition helped to explain the significance of any triggers or turning points, evolutionary or preservation processes within the context of the whole narrative account. Chaos, quest and restitution could not be identified through paradigmatic analysis of these narrative interview texts. It was only when narratives were considered in their

entirety that these narrative types and their significance for identity became apparent.

4. The adoption of a sequential research design, commencing with analysis of print media texts followed by analysis of parents' and health visitors' narratives enabled the development of a theoretical framework that enabled connections to be made between the different ways in which smacking is and has been conceptualised with participant's experience of transition and for some, identity transformation. The significance of such transformation is that the re-constructed identity is congruent with what was deemed by the participant to constitute being a 'good parent'. Furthermore, for those participants that experienced turning points, triggers and evolution in relation to how they practiced being a parent, notions of what it is to be a child and what it is to be a parent was underpinned by principles of recognition and reciprocity.

5. In re-presenting memories of past experience participants were able to make sense of the present. At the end of the interview some participants reflected on their experience of telling their stories, saying that being asked to recount their experiences in this autobiographical style had allowed them to make connections, to see things differently, to make sense of their experience in the context of the present. On one occasion, at the end of the interview when the tape recorder had been switched off, a health visitor participant commented saying 'I've never been asked to do this before'. As a participant in the current study, this was the first time her personal life as a parent had been acknowledged alongside her professional life as a health visitor. Within her

professional life, managers or training providers had ignored the personal self of mother or grandmother: instead self was regarded as a dichotomy with one aspect disregarded or neglected. A possible reason for this phenomenon according to Butler et al (2007), is because over the past twenty years evidence based approaches to care have been favoured in place of approaches that value the professional's own emotional repertoire.

6. I regard it as a strength of the current study that in allowing health visitor participants to define 'self' in the recounting of their narratives in the form of a biography with little interference from the researcher, they have been able to construct a more holistic version of self. Butler et al (2007 p.281) argue that such reflexivity is necessary if health and social care professionals are to more actively help service users to 're-story' their lives by reaching new understandings of the conflict between what is socially constructed and personal experience. In a similar kind of way, as researcher and writer of this thesis, I have been constantly aware of my own personal and professional narrative: where it is different to that of the study participants and also where there has been resonance with my own experience. This, I hope enabled me to consider participants' narratives sensitively.

Study Limitations

Within the methodology chapter three main limitations to the study design were identified.

1. Although the use of narrative approaches to interviewing enabled the research question to be answered, copious data was generated. While, for the

purpose of doctoral study I was afforded the luxury of time, this resource might be constrained within funded research projects.

2. There is a need to engage with fathers and grandfathers to allow their narrative accounts to be heard first hand and to allow similarities and differences with mothers' and grandmothers' narratives about smacking to be explored.

3. Non –health visitor participants from the Scottish islands were not recruited to the study and therefore it was not possible to compare their experience with that of health visitor island participants. It was therefore not possible to discover if 'preservation' as a response to changing social discourse about understandings of smacking was part of non-health visitor parents and grandparents experience of transition. If island parents, like some mainland parents have sought to access a 'toolbox' to support sensitive and non-violent parenting strategies, then there are further implications for health visiting practice. Timely and effective engagement with families, using evidence based public health approaches can enable parents to identify their strengths and to learn how to use a 'toolbox' tailored to their specific needs.

Chapter Four: Representation of smacking in the print media.

In part one of this study, print media representation of parents' use of smacking was explored in order to provide an understanding of the social context for the second part of the study. In other words, to shed a glimpse of light upon one

aspect of the social world inhabited by study participants and to discover the discourse that was generated by the print media during the lifecourse of study participants. Although main purpose of this part of the study was to provide a window into the social world, it also allowed comparisons to be made between the themes found within print media texts and participants' narratives.

Key themes found within print media narratives:

1. The rights of the child: children are people
2. The effectiveness of smacking: a short sharp smack
3. Yob culture: the long-term effects of lack of parental discipline
4. Hunting, shooting and smacking: the role of the state.

Analysis of print media texts offered insights into the way that the nature of debate within the print media moved from purely practical considerations about the effectiveness of smacking to dialogue about the human rights of children and the role of the state in intervention. This change in discourse was mirrored in participants' biographical narratives. The significance for the sociology of childhood is that the more recent narratives of children's rights, act as a marker in time, a time of societal transition, a time when the subordinate position of children was being challenged within popular cultural genres as well as within scholarly texts.

Chapter Five: Production and Performance of a Life Story

Chapter Five is the first of the three chapters that comprised Part Two of the study: a narrative study of the lives of parents, grandparents and health visitors

Analysis of structural aspects of the narrative biographical interviews, demonstrated the way in which language contributed to definitions of smacking. Smacking was defined by participants in two ways; as an act of violence, or as an appropriate form of parental discipline. Participants' definitions of smacking demonstrated that there was both convergence and divergence with print media representation of smacking. The way in which smacking was conceptualised in the print media had changed between 1989 and 2004, with early texts representing smacking as an effective discipline strategy while more recent accounts challenged the legitimacy of smacking as an infringement of children's human rights. This cultural transition was mirrored in individual participants narratives at intergenerational and intragenerational levels amongst the majority of mainland participants, however, most Island participants did not reiterate this. Island health visitors were more likely than mainland participants to define smacking as a justifiable parenting practice. This intriguing finding was explored further in the following chapter, which examined the content of participants' narratives.

As a result of analysing the narrative interviews in terms of their form, the concept of transition within the lives of participants began to evolve as a framework for interpreting the content of the narratives.

Chapter Six: Thematic Content of Narratives

Within chapter six, the concept of transition was used to provide a framework for analysis of all participants' narratives. In addition to developmental transitions from childhood to parenthood and for some participants a response

to their role as health visitors, participants described different experiences of personal transition. Participants' responses to society's changing attitudes toward the use of physical punishment on children were described within a typology comprised of four narrative threads; turning points, triggers, evolution and preservation. These different responses had implications for the way in which individual parents reconstructed their moral identity and ideas about relationship between parents and children. Participants that recounted stories of triggers, turning points and evolution, placed smacking within the wider context of what it is to be a good parent and emphasised recognition of children and parents as participants within a reciprocal relationship. Conversely, those participants that recounted stories of preservation, emphasised the need for children to understand boundaries, set by a parent in control.

Although thematic analysis of the content of participants' narratives allowed insights into the nature of personal transition, this was not contextualised within the life story in its entirety as narrated, what went on before and how participants made sense of their experiences. This was remedied within the following chapter.

Chapter Seven: Narrative Exemplars: Lives in Transition

Chapter seven focused upon six participants' narratives that most clearly illustrated the narrative threads discovered by thematic analysis of content. Frank's (1995) typology of transition, Chaos, Quest and Restitution, was used as a 'listening device', which allowed a deeper understanding of how participants made sense of their experience and how these small stories of

ordinary lives, contextualised within a whole biography, take place within the context of changing wider social processes.

The idea of transition seemed to act as a place where personal stories of transition; chaos, quest and restitution, and experiences of different contexts of change as discovered in the themes found across the narrative data intersect with ideas about the social world in transition, for example, as represented in the print media. Analysis of narratives when considered in their entirety enabled another layer of interpretation that built upon what was discovered in the previous stages of interpretation.

Ideas about relationship were always at the forefront of participants' narratives; relationship between parents and children and also the relationship of parents and children with a changing social world. Within participants' narratives smacking was not considered as an isolated aspect of behaviour in an abstract way but instead as part of a story of change in child parent relationship. Within these biographical narratives valuing reciprocity was part of the experience of intergenerational change. Participants described how the experience of learning from each other and valuing the others contribution in the kind of way that is described by Mayall (2001) and earlier by O'Neill (1994) characterised new expectations of what it is to be a child and what it is to be a parent. Within parent-child relationships where reciprocity was engendered, there was recognition of children as 'differently equal'.

Chapter Eight: Big Structures, Large Processes and Small Stories

The aims of chapter eight were to synthesise the findings from the different parts of this study and to discuss in greater depth some of the emergent key issues for narrative methodologies. The first part of the chapter focused upon relationships between societal discourse, collective memory and biography. This was followed by a discussion of apparent contradictions within narrative accounts and points of tension that exist between the personal narrative and the socially constructed narrative about the nature of smacking.

Findings from the current doctoral study add another dimension to understandings of the 'smacking debate'. They have in a sequential way, illuminated connections between definitions of smacking and the importance of transition for transformed identity and for mindful parenting that recognises children's capacity for reciprocity.

The importance O'Neill's (1995) covenant theory, which includes the principles of recognition, reciprocity and responsibility, was applied to participants' narratives. Clear implications for relationship between adults and children, society and children and for public health policy were identified.

9:3 IMPLICATIONS FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE

Although the main aims of this study were not to inform clinical nursing and social care practice per se, on reflection there are some aspects that merit consideration and that have implications for future research, policy and practice.

One particular aspect was drawn to my attention at a post-graduate retreat in which I participated. This is illustrated in the following journal entry:

Journal Extract 4: Postgraduate Retreat

I was asked an interesting question at the end of my presentation, 'If I was to return to Health Visiting, is there anything from this study that might influence any change in my practice?'

It occurs to me, that in the same way participants in this study agreed to narrativise their biographies in relation to physical discipline and were allowed to make connections with past experience as children, present beliefs and practice and to look to children's futures in a way that has potential to be emancipatory, a similar approach could be used by health and social care professionals who work with families. Giving time to parents to present an autobiography of their experience may help parents to make connections with their past experience and to identify any significance for the future of their parent-child relationship. Such an approach to intervention takes account of the significance of generation, cultural memory and identity. Understandings about the different ways that parents experience transition within the context of societal transition when working with families may help to validate experience and to strengthen health improvement work with families.

May 2010

Support for parents is firmly placed within the broader public health agenda in the Scottish Government's 'Guide To Getting it Right for Every Child' (Scottish Government 2008). There is a challenge for health and social care professionals who work with parents, if within an evolving societal discourse, smacking as a method of punishment ceases to be part of our cultural repertoire. If parents are shifting from a position of smacking to seeking alternative methods of discipline, there is not only a need to support them and to give consistent advice about alternatives strategies, the evidence base, but

also to be cognisant of the 'place in the road' parents are at. The use of a dialogic approach (Turney 1997), which takes account of personal biographies in their entirety rather than to simply consider events in isolation, may help parents make connections with the past, present and for the future. There are implications for the education of health and social care professionals who work with families, to enable them to use biographical narrative in an emancipatory way to support parents and children (Butler et al 2007;Turney 1997). The use of reflexivity may foster greater sensitivity to issues of power in the relationship between health and social care professionals and service users. Although both Butler et al and Turney focus upon the relationship between social workers and service users, their conclusions and recommendations about understandings of 'partnership' can also be applied to relationships between health visitors and their clients.

Butler et al (2007)) suggest that allowing the personal into the professional does not mean an assumption of an equal partnership, but instead allows recognition of differences in the way that things are understood amongst people of equal worth. In using such an approach, recognition of difference prompts the professional to carefully attend to what is said and to learn something of the service users perspective.

9:4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Participants within the current doctoral study recognised a need for health care professionals, such as health visitors, to support parents in developing sensitive parenting. Whether or not a legislative ban on smacking is enacted, there is a

role for health care professionals to work with individuals and communities to support sensitive parents and to enable parents to adopt an individualised 'toolbox'. By individualised, I mean working in such a way as previously described, recognising the 'place in the road' that individuals are at, reflexively developing an awareness of one's own position and using evidence based interventions that focus upon relationship (Barlow 2010). Therefore, there are implications for education and training for all healthcare professionals and particularly for Island health visitors, who within the current doctoral study highlighted their need to access education and training in evidence based parenting intervention.

In a similar way to that described by mainland health visitors (see Chapter Six), such education and training may serve to challenge current values of 'preservation' and could act as a 'trigger' for moving to a new place in the road that is less likely to emphasise control of children by adults and more likely to value reciprocity within parent and child relationship. Furthermore, in the interests of equitable access for families, in accordance with Scottish Government policies, 'Getting it Right For Every Child' (Scottish Executive 2006) and 'Better Health Better Care' (Scottish Government 2007) any intervention to support sensitive parenting needs to take into account the challenges of working in remote and rural communities.

The use of public health approaches to support sensitive parenting, can not only work towards safeguarding children from abuse but more fundamentally

may change the way that children are positioned in society through recognition of their worth.

9:5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

O'Neill (1994) is clear that in order for a covenant society, in which relationships of reciprocity amongst children and parents can be realised, the state must be involved. There are a number of ways in which the state can support parenting. Within the UK, a number of proposals have been made for state intervention, operating at different levels, to support parents and families, as public health priorities (Barlow 2010). Population based approaches that operate at the level of primary prevention aim to shift societal behavioural norms. For example, in a similar way to the success of legislation to change attitudes and behaviour in relation to drink driving and the use of seat belts, it is suggested that anti smacking legislation make work towards shifting societal norms in relation to parents' use of smacking (Barlow 2010; NSPPC 2010).

Interestingly the HM Government White Paper (2010), the strategy for public health in England, 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People', has as one of its aims, 'giving children the best start in life'. One of the ways that the report suggests that this will be achieved is by increasing the number of health visitors within neighbourhoods to support families and to 'build community capacity as part of the 'Big Society'. What is not clear in this white paper is the way in which children themselves are included within the 'Big Society'. There are similarities between O'Neill's (1994) covenant society and the current coalition government's concept of a Big Society, in relation to civic responsibility for

example. O'Neill is clear that a covenant society includes everyone, adults and children. It is not clear how children as part of a 'big society' have been included in formulating policy decisions and recommendations within a public health strategy that is about the health of children and adults; adults have acted on behalf of children.

The implications of this for children is that they are not recognised as 'equally different' (Bjerk 2011) within the white paper and their contribution to the Big Society does not seem to have been recognised and is not explained. Connections between responsibility, recognition and reciprocity do not seem to have been made. Furthermore, the logic is that if everyone is included in the Big Society, then all should be afforded the same human rights to freedom from assault. Therefore a further recommendation for policy is the need for clarity about what and who constitutes the Big Society and if this does include children, then policy on parental use of smacking must reflect this.

9:6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. Future research with non - health visitor island parents and grandparents may allow similarities and differences in their experience to be compared to that of health visitor participants of the current study. This would enable a more in depth exploration of the relationship between religion, culture and personal beliefs and practice in relation to island parents' definitions of smacking and to further develop the concept of preservation within the framework of transition.

2. In future research about how beliefs, attitudes and experience of smacking have changed over time, there is a need to engage with fathers and grandfathers to allow their narrative accounts to be heard first hand, in order to allow similarities and differences with mothers and grandmother's narratives about smacking to be discovered.

AFTERWORD

The opportunity to carry out this study has contributed enormously to my personal development as a researcher. The adoption of a flexible approach within a qualitative research strategy that allowed the study to develop as I have explored new ideas and approaches has been challenging. However, I have tried throughout to retain an open mind about how the study should progress and have made adjustments along the way. This for me is what is exciting about using narratives approaches within qualitative research; ordinary lives through interpretation of narrative accounts in the light of social and cultural context along with application of theory, become extraordinary.

This study was made possible through the generous contribution of the parents, grandparents and health visitor participants who were willing to share with me their often heart felt experience. My hope is that parents who are making waves will continue to do so and that for the next generation of parents, when looking back over their past will recall memories of reciprocity within parent and child relationship and all that that entails for human rights, as this new position, this work in progress, becomes firmly embedded within society and becomes part of cultural memory.

REFERENCES

- Aaronovitch D. (1999) *Yes, I Smack My Kids Too- But It's an Admission of My Failure*. The Independent, London. 21 May, p3
- Alanen L. (2010) Taking Children's Rights Seriously. *Childhood* 17 (5) 5-8.
- Alcorn G.B. (2000), 'Safety valve' effect of spanking (letter). *British Medical Journal* 320, 261–262.
- Alderson P. & Montgomery J. (1996) What About Me. *Health Service Journal* 11 22-24
- Allen G. (2005) "Aporia". *The Literary Encyclopedia*. 20 July 2005. <http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1578>, accessed 14 April 2010
- Anderson S., Brownlie J. and Murray L. (2002). *Disciplining Children: Research with Children in Scotland*. Central Research Unit, Scottish Executive. Edinburgh.
- Andrews M. (2008) Never the Last Word: Revisiting the Data. In Andrews M., Squire C. & Tamboukou M. Eds. *Doing Narrative Research* Sage. London
- Andrews M., Squire C. & Tamboukou M. Eds. (2008) *Doing Narrative Research* Sage. London
- Aries P. (1960) *Centuries of Childhood*. Penguin. Harmondsworth.
- Arskey & O'Malley (2005). Scoping studies: Towards a Methodological Framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8 (1) 19-32
- Arvay M.J., (2003) *Doing Reflexivity: A Collaborative Narrative Approach* in Findlay L. and Gough B. Eds. *Reflexivity: A practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Science*. Blackwell. London.
- Ayres, L., Kavanaugh, K. and Knafl K.A. (2003) Within-Case and Across-Case Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*. 13. 871-883. DOI: 10.1177/1049732303013006008
- Bandura A. (1977) *Social Learning Theory* Prentice Hall NY
- Barrett B. (2004) *The Big Issue* (letter) The Sun, London. 9 July.
- Barbour R. (2008) *Introducing Qualitative Research*. Sage. London.

Barlow J. and Scott J. (2010) *Safeguarding in the 21st Century – Where to Now?* Research in the Practice. Totness

Barthes R. (1972) *Mythologies*. Jonathan Cape. London

Bates J. (2004) Use of Narrative Interviewing in Everyday Information Behaviour Research. *Library and Information Science Research* 26, 15-28

Baumrind D. (1997) Necessary Distinctions. *Psychological Inquiry*. 8. 176-229

- Baumrind D., Larzelere R.E. & Cowan P.A. (2002). Ordinary physical punishment: Is it harmful? Comment on Gershoff (2002). *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 580–589.

Bayley J., Wallace L.M. & Choudhry K. (2009) Fathers and Parenting Programmes: Barriers and Best Practice. *Community Practitioner*. 82 (4) 28-31.

BBC (2008) Parenting Message Board www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbparents

(Accessed on April 29th 2008).

Belsky J. (1993) Etiology of Child Maltreatment: A Developmental Ecological Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*. 114 (3) 413-434.

Belsky J., Bell B., Bradley R., Stallard N., and Stewart–Brown S. (2006) Socioeconomic Risk, Parenting During the Pre-School Years and Child Health Age 6 Years. *European Journal of Public Health* 17 (5) 508-513.

- Benjet C. & Kazdin A.E. (2003), Spanking children: the controversies, findings and new directions. *Clinical Psychology Review* 23, 197– 224.

- Bidmead C. & Cottam D. (2000), Debate: Do community nurses and health visitors have a moral duty to help end smacking? *Nursing Times* 96, 18.

Bjerke H. (2011) Children as ‘Differently Equal’ responsible beings: Norwegian Children’s Views of Responsibility. *Childhood* 18. (1) 67-80

Bleeker E. (2004) *Are Children Happier Now That Punishment Has Fallen Out of Favour (letter)*. The Daily Telegraph, London, 8 July. p. 23

Bourdieu P. (1997) Méditations Pascaliennes. In Nieuwenhuys O. (2008) The Ethics of Children’s Rights. *Childhood* 15 (4) 4-11

Bower-Russell M., Knutsen J., & Winebarger A. (2001) Disciplinary History, Adult Disciplinary Attitudes and Risk for Abusive Parenting. *Journal of Community Psychiatry* 29 (3) 219-240

Bradway, C.W. & Barg F. (2006) Developing a Cultural Model For Long-Term Female Urinary Incontinence. *Social Science and Medicine*. 63. 3150-3161

- Brannon J. & O'Brien M. (1996) *Children in Families: Research and Policy*. Falmer Press. London.
- Branston G. & Stafford R. (1996) *The Media Student's Book*. Routledge. London
- Bridgeman J. (2002) 'The Child's Body' in Evans M. and Lee E. (Eds) *Real Bodies: A Sociological Introduction*. Palgrave. Basingstoke.
- Bridges, W. (2004) *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. Da Capo Press. Cambridge MA.
- Briggs J.L. (1978) The Origins of Non-violence. Inuit Management of Aggression. In Montague A. ed. *Learning Non-Aggression: The Experience of Non-Literate Societies*. Oxford University Press. New York
- Bronfenbrenner U. (1979) *the Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge MA.
- Brownlie J. (2001) The 'Being Risky' Child: Governing Childhood and Sexual Risk. *Sociology* 35 519-533
- Brownlie J. 2006. The Basic Stuff of Our Memories: Embodying and Embedding Discipline. *Sociological Research Online*
<http://socresonline.org.uk/11/4/brownlie.html/>>
- Bruner J. (1987) Life as Narrative. *Social Research* 54. 11-32.
- Bussman K.D. (1996). *Family Violence Against Children: A Challenge for Society*. 91-105. Walter de Gruyter. New York.
- Bussmann K.D. (2004) Evaluating the Subtle Impact of a Ban on Corporal Punishment of Children in Germany. *Child Abuse Review*. 13. 292-311.
- Butler A., Ford D., & Tregaskis C. (1997) Who Do We Think We Are? Self and Reflexivity in Social Work Practice. *Qualitative Social Work* 6 (3) 281-299.
- Casson R. (1983) Schemata in Cultural Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 12, 429-462.
- Chick, N., & Meleis A., (1986) Transitions: A Nursing Concern, in Chinn P.L. (ed) (1986) *Nursing Research Methodology: Issues and Implementation*. Aspen, Rockville. MD.
- Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance (2000) *Moving on From Smacking*. NSPPC, London.
- Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance (www.childrenareunbeatable.org.uk accessed on October 30th 2009).

Christensen, P. 2000. Childhood and the Cultural Constitution of Vulnerable Bodies, in, Prout A. Ed. 2000. *The Body, Childhood and Society*. Macmillan Press Ltd.

Clarkson J. (2004) *Prison For Not Sitting Up Straight At Meal Times*. The Sun, London. 6 November.

Clifford J., & Marcus G.E. (1986) *Writing Ethnography: The Poetics and Politics of Writing Culture*. University of California Press. Berkley.

Consensus Statements (1996) *Pediatrics*. 98. (4) 853.

Cowley S. & Billings R.J. (1999) Resources Revisited: Salutogenesis From a Lay Perspective. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 29 994-1004

Cox E. (2004) *Your View (letter)* Daily Record, 14 July, p34

- CPHVA (2001), Physical Punishment of Children: A Consultation [Online].

- Available at:
<http://www.msfcphva.org/cphvaresponses/resscosmacking.htm>

- Access date: 03.10.09.

Crotty M. 1998. *Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. Sage, California.

- Cutting E. (2001) *It Doesn't Sort Anything*. Save the Children Scotland.

Czarniawska B. (2004) *Narratives in Social Science Research*. Sage. London

Daniel B. & Taylor J. (2001) *Engaging with Fathers: Practice Issues for Health and Social Care*. Jessica Kingsley. London.

Jean Paul Richter Ed. (1880) *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (c.1490). Held in The British Museum. London www.thebritishmuseum.org (accessed on July 4th 2007)

Davis P. (1999) Corporal Punishment Cessation: Social Contexts and Parents' Experience. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 14 492-510

Davis P.W, Chandler J.L, LaRossa R. (2004) "I've Tried the Switch but he Laughs Through the Tears:" The Use and Conceptualisation of Corporal Punishment During the Machine Age, 1924-1939. *Child Abuse and Neglect*. 28, 1291-1310

Deater-Deckard K., & Dodge K.A. (1997) Externalising Behaviour Problems and Discipline Revisited: Nonlinear Effects and Variation by Culture, Context and Gender. *Psychological Inquiry*. 8 161-175

Denton R. (1978) Notes on Childhood in a Non-Violent Context : The Semai Case. In Montague A. Ed. *Learning Non-Aggression: The Experience of Non-Literate Societies*. Oxford University Press. New York.

Denzin N. (1988) *Interpretive Interactionism*. Sage, California.

Denzin N. (1989) *Interpretive Biography: Qualitative Research Methods. Volume 17*. Sage. CA.

Denzin N. & Lincoln, Y. Eds. (2005) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage. London

Department for Education and Skills (2004). *Children Act*. Stationery Office. London.

Department of Health (2000) *Protecting Children, Supporting Parents. A Consultation Document on the Physical Punishment of Children*. DoH, London.

de Witt L. & Ploeg J. (2006) Critical Appraisal of Rigour in Interpretive Phenomenological Nursing Research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 55 (2) 215-229

Dobbs T. and Duncan J. (2004), Children's Perspectives on Physical Discipline: A New Zealand Example, *Childcare in Practice*. 10 (4) 367-379

Draper P. (1978) The Learning Environment for Aggression and Anti-Social Behaviour Among the Kung. In Montague A. Ed. *Learning Non-Aggression: The Experience of Non-Literate Societies*. Oxford University Press. New York

Duff P. (2000) Non-Violent Discipline *British Medical Journal* 320 261-262

du Gay P. (Ed) (1997) *Production of Culture/ Cultures of Production*. Sage/Open University. London.

- Durrant J.E. (1997), The Status of Swedish Children and Youth Since the Passage of the 1979 Corporal Punishment Ban. Save the Children, London.

Durrant J.E. (1999) Evaluating the Success of Sweden's Corporal Punishment Ban. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 23 435-448

-

- Durrant J. E. (2000), The Status of Swedish Children and Youth Since the

- Passage of the 1979 Corporal Punishment Ban. *Save the Children Fund*, London.

- Edwards R and Gillies V. (2004), Support in Parenting: Values and Consensus Concerning Who to Turn To. *Journal of Social Policy*. 33 (4). 623-643.

Elliman D. & Lynch M. (2000) The Physical Punishment of Children. *Archives of Diseases in Childhood*. 83 (3) 196-198.

- Ellison C. & Bradshaw M. (2009) Religious Beliefs, Socio-political Ideology, and Attitudes Toward Corporal Punishment. *Journal of Family Issues* 30 (3) 320-340
- Ellison C., Bartkowski J. & Segal M (1996) Conservative Protestantism and the Parental Use of Corporal Punishment. *Social Forces* 74 (3) 1003-1028
- Emden C. (1998) a. Conducting a Narrative Analysis. *Collegian*. Vol. 5 (3) 34-39
- Emden C. (1998) b. Theoretical Perspectives on Narrative Inquiry. *Collegian*. Vol. 5 (2) 30-35
- Emden C. and Sandelowski M. (1998) the Good, The Bad and the Relative, Part One: Goodness in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*. 4. 206-212.
- Emden C. and Sandelowski M. (1999) the Good, The Bad and the Relative, Part Two: Goodness and the Criterion Problem in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*. 5 2-7.
- Farrington D.P and Welsh B.C (1999) Delinquency Prevention Using Family-Based Interventions. *Children and Society*. 13, (4) 287-303
- Flick U. (2000) Episodic Interviewing. In Bauer M.W, and Gaskell G, (2000) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: a Practical Handbook*. Sage London.
- Flick U. (2006) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research 3rd Edition*. Sage. London
- Flick U., von Kardorff E., and Steinke I. Eds. (2004) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. Sage London.
- Flynn C. P. (1994). Regional Differences in Attitudes Towards Corporal Punishment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 56(2) 314-325
- Foucault M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish*. Tavistock. London.
- Foucault M. (1980) *Power and Knowledge* Tavistock. London
- Frank, A.W. (1995) *The Wounded Storyteller. Body, Illness and Ethics*. Chicago University Press. Chicago and London.
- Frank A. (2002) Why Study People's Stories? The Dialogical Ethics of Narrative Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 1 (1) Article 6. Retrieved May 16th 2008. <http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm>
- Freeman M. (2007) Why it is Important to Take Children's Rights Seriously. *International Journal of Children's Rights*. 15. 5-23

Frick P.J., Christian R.E. & Wooton J.M. (1999) Age Trends in the Association Between Parenting Practices and Conduct Problems. *Behaviour Modification* 23 106-128

Frost N. (2009) 'Do You Know What I Mean?': the use of a Pluralistic Narrative Analysis Approach in the Interpretation of an Interview. *Qualitative Research* 9 (1) 9-29

- Fry R. (2000) Parents must be in charge of their children (letter). *British Medical Journal*. 320, 1538.
- Fuchs M. & Berg, E. (1993) *Phänomenologie der Differenz. Reflexionsstufen Ethnographischer Repräsentation*, in Flick, U. 2006. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. 3rd edition. Sage. London.

Fulton Y. (1996) Children's Rights and the Role of the Nurse. *Paediatric Nursing* 8 19-31

- Gallup Organisation (1995), *Disciplining Children in America: A Gallup Poll Report*. Gallup, Princeton, NJ.
- Garbarino J. (2005) Corporal Punishment in Ecological Perspective. In Donnelly M & Straus M. (Eds) *Corporal Punishment of children in Theoretical Perspective*. Yale University Press. Newhaven. CT.

Gardener G. (2001) Unreliable Memories and Other Contingencies: Problems With Biographical knowledge. *Qualitative Research*. 1 (2) 185-204.

Garro L. (2000) Remembering What One Knows and the Construction of the Past: A Comparison of Cultural Consensus Theory and Cultural Schema Theory. *Ethos*. 28 (3) 275-319

Georgakopoulou A. (2006) Thinking Big With Small Stories in Narrative and Identity Analysis. *Narrative Inquiry*. 16 (1) 122-130

Gergan K. and Gergan M. (1991) *Towards Reflexive Methodologies in* Steier F. Ed. *Research and Reflexivity*. Sage. London.

Gergan, K. J. 1999. *An Invitation to Social Construction*. London. Sage.

- Gershoff E. (2002a), Corporal Punishment By Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review. *Psychological Bulletin* 128,539–579.
- Gershoff E. (2002b), Corporal Punishment, Physical Abuse, and the Burden of Proof: Reply to Baumrind, Larzelere, and Cowan (2002), Holden (2002), and Parke (2002). *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 602–611.

Gheertz C. (1988) *The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford University Press. CA.

Gheertz C. (1973) *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*. In Guba E.G. & Lincoln Y.S. (1989) *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage publications, London.

Giles-Sims J. and Lockhart C. (2005) Culturally Shaped Patterns of Disciplining Children. *Journal of Family Issues*. 26 (2) 196-218

-

- Gillies V. (2006), Parenting, Class and Culture: Exploring the Context of Childrearing. *Community Practitioner*. 79 (4) 114-117.

Gledhill C. (1997) Genre and Gender: The Case of The Soap Opera in Hall S. Ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage. London

- Gleeson C. (2002), Smacking – Issues For Nurses. *Primary Health Care* 12, 16–18.

Goddard C. and Liddell M.J. (1995) Child Abuse Fatalities and The Media: Lesson From a Case Study. *Child Abuse Review* 4 356-364

Goddard C. & Saunders B. (2000) the Gender Neglect and Textual Abuse of Children in the Print Media. *Child Abuse Review*. 9 37-48

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday. New York.

Gough B. & Reavey P. (1997) Parental Accounts Regarding the Physical Punishment of Children: Discourses of Dis/empowerment. *Child Abuse and Neglect*. 21, 417-430

Gripsud J (2002) *Understanding Media Culture*. Edward Arnold. London

Grusec J.E. (1983) The Internalisation of Altruistic Dispositions. In Higgins E.T. (Ed) *Social Cognitions and Social Development*. Cambridge University Press. NY.

Grusec J.E., & Goodnow J. (1994) Impact of Parental Discipline Methods on the Child's Internalisation of Values: A Reconceptualisation of Current Points of View. *Developmental Psychology*. 30 4-19

Guba E.G. & Lincoln Y.S. (1989) *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage publications, London.

Gulland A. (1999) Break the Smack Habit. *Nursing Times* 95 (26) 18

- Gunnoe M.L. (2003) The Whole is Less Than the Sum of the Parts: Problems With Meta Analyses That Seek to Homogenize Incongruent Groups. In Ripoll-Núñez K.J. and Rohner R.P. (2006), Corporal Punishment in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Directions for a Research Agenda. *Cross Cultural Research*. 40 (3) 220-249.

- Hain R.D.W. (2000), Occasional Smacking Does No harm (letter). *British Medical Journal* 320, 1538.

Hall E.T. (1977) *Beyond Culture*. Anchor Books, New York.

Hall S, Critcher C, Jefferson T, Clarke J & Roberts B (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, The State, and Law and Order*. The Macmillan Press. Basingstoke.

Hall S. 1997. Introduction. In Hall S. Ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage. London

- Halme N, Tarkka M, Nummi T and Åstedt-Kirki (2006), The Effect of Parenting Stress on Fathers' Availability and Engagement. *Childcare in Practice*. 12 (1) 13-26

Halpern, J. (2001) *From Detached Concern to Empathy: Humanising Medical Practice*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Hammersley M. and Atkinson P. (1995) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (2nd Edition) Routledge. London

Hart C. (1998) *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. Sage Publications. London.

Hazel N, Ghate D, Creighton S, Field J, Finch S (2003). Violence against children: Thresholds of Acceptance for Physical Punishment in a Normative Study of Parents, Children and Discipline, in Stanko E. (Ed) *The Meanings of Violence*. Routledge, London.

Health Select Committee (2003), Response to the Laming Inquiry [Online].

Available at

<http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentarycommittees/healthcommittee>. Accessed on: 29.08.03.

Helman C. (2000) *Culture, Health and Illness*. 4th Edition. Butterworth Heinemann. Oxford

Hendrick (1997) Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An interpretive Survey, 1800 to the Present. In James A. and Prout A. *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. Falmer Press. London.

- Holden G. (2002), Perspectives on the Effects of Corporal Punishment: Comment on Gershoff (2002). *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 590–595.

Hood S., Kelley P., & Mayall B. (1996) *Children, Parents and Risk: A Report on a Research Study*. Social Science Research Unit. London.

Horgan G. (2002) *It's a Hit, Not a Smack*. Save the Children Ireland.

- Holstein J.A. & Gubrium J.F. (1995) *The Active Interview*. Sage. Thousand oaks. CA.
- James A. & James A.L. (2004) *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice*. Palgrave. London.
- James A. & Prout A. Eds. (1997) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the sociological Study of Childhood. 2nd Edition*. Falmer Press. London.
- Johnson B. (2004) *Where's Percles When You Want Him?* The Daily Telegraph, London. 8 July, p22
- Jutengren G. and Palmérus K. (2002) A Comparison of Swedish and US Fathers' Self-Reported Use of Parental Discipline. *Children and Society*. 16 246-259.
- Kenny M. (2004) Teachers' Attitudes Towards and Knowledge of Child Maltreatment. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 28. 1311-1319
- King M. & Watson K. (2005) *Representing Health: Discourses of Health and Illness in the Media*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Kitzinger J. (1996) Media Representations of Child Sexual Abuse Risks. *Child Abuse Review*. 5, 319-333
- Kitzinger J. (1998) Resisting the Message: The Extent and Limits of Media Influence, in Miller P., Kitzinger J., Williams K & Beharrell P. (Eds), *The Circuit of Mass Communication*. Sage. London
- Kitzinger J. (2000) Media Templates: Patterns of Association and the (Re)Construction of Meaning Over Time. *Media Culture and Society*. 22 (1), 61-84
- Korbin J.E. (2003) Children, Childhoods and Violence. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 431-446
- Kralik D., Visentin K & Van Loon A. (2006) Transition: A Literature Review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 55 (3) 320-329
- Kuzel A. (1992) Sampling in Qualitative Inquiry in Crabtree and Miller (1992) *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage. London.
- Kvale S. (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* Sage. Thousand Oaks. CA.
- Labov W. and Waletzky J. (1967) Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience. In Helm J. Ed. *Essays in the Verbal and Visual Arts*. University of Washington. Seattle.

Lansford J.E., et al. (2005) Physical Discipline and Children's Adjustment: Cultural Normativeness as a Moderator. *Child Development*. 76 (6) 1234-1246.

- Larzelere R.E. (1996), A review of the outcomes of parental use of non-abusive or customary physical punishment. *Pediatrics* 98, 824– 828.

Larzelere R.E., Sather P.R., Schneider W., Larson D. & Pike P.L. (1998) Punishment Enhances Reasoning's Effectiveness as a Disciplinary Response In Delaying Toddler Misbehaviour recurrences. *Child and Family Behaviour Therapy* 18 35-57

- Larzelere R.E. (2000a) Child Outcomes of Non Abusive and Customary Physical Punishment By Parents: An Updated Literature Review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*. 3 (4) 199-221

- Larzelere R.E. (2000b), Weak evidence for a smacking ban (letter). *British Medical Journal*. 320, 1538.

Levinson D. (1989) *Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Sage. California.

Lincoln Y. (1995) Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 1. 275-289

Linde C. (2000) The Acquisition of a Speaker by a Story: How History Becomes memory and Identity. *Ethos* 28 (4) 608-632

Liu J. & Hilton D. (2005) How the Past Weighs on the Present: Social Representations of History and Their Role in Identity Politics. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44, 537-556

Lowden J. (2002) Children's Rights: A Decade of Dispute. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 37 (1) 100-107.

Lyon C. (2000) *Loving Smack or Lawful Assault*. National Children's Bureau. London.

MacKinnon D.W. (1938) Violation of Prohibitions In Gershoff E.T. (2002) Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviours and Experiences. *Psychological Bulletin* 128 (4) 539-579

MacMillan H.L., Boyle M.H., Wong M.Y.Y, Duku E.K., Fleming J.E. and Walsh C.A. (1999) Slapping and Spanking in Childhood and its Association With Lifetime Prevalence of Psychiatric Disorders in a General Population Sample. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. 161 (7):805-9

Mason J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd Edition. London, Sage

May V. (2008) On Being a 'Good' Mother: The Moral Presentation of Self in Written Life Stories. *Sociology* 42 (3) 470-486

Mayall B. (1998) Towards a Sociology of Child Health. *Sociology of Health and Illness*. 20 (3) 269-288

Mayall B. (2000) The Sociology of Childhood in Relation to Children's Rights. *The Journal of Children's Rights* 8. 243-259

McAdams D.P., Josselson R Lieblich A., (2001) *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition*. American Psychological Association. Washington DC

McCord J. (1997) On Discipline *Psychological Inquiry* 8 215-217

McGillivray A. (1997) 'He'll learn it on his body: disciplining childhood in Canadian law'. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*. Vol. 5, pp193-242.

McIntosh A. (2001) *Soil and Soul: People Versus Corporate Power*. Aurum Press. London.

McIlpatrick, S., Sullivan K., McKenna H., and Parahoo K., (2007) Patients Experiences of Having Chemotherapy in a Day Hospital Setting. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 59 (3) 264-273.

McKay S., and Bonner F., (1999) Telling Stories: Breast Cancer Biographies in Australian Women's Magazines. *Women's Studies International Forum*. 22(5) 563-71.

McKeown J., Clarke A., & Repper J. (2006) Life Story Work in Health and Social Care: Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 55 (2) 237-247.

McCloud S (1994), *Understanding Comics*. Harper. London

Milford R., Kleve L., Lea J. & Greenwood R. (2006) A Pilot Evaluation of the Solihull Approach. *Community Practitioner* 79 (11) 358-362

Miles M.B. & Huberman A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis; An Expanded Source Book*. 2nd Edition. Sage. California.

Mishler, E.G. (1986) *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mishler E G. (1995) Models of Narrative Analysis: A Typology. *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 5 (2) 87-123

Mishler E.G. (2004) Historian of the Self: Restorying Lives, Revising Identities. *Research in Human Development*. 1 (1&2) 101-121.

Moore S. 1993 *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption*. Sage London.

Morse J. (1989) Strategies for Sampling in Morse J. (Ed) *Qualitative Nursing Research: A Contemporary Dialogue*. Rockville. Aspen CA.

Morse J, (2003) The Paradox of Qualitative Research Design. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13 (10) 1335-1336

Mullin A (2006) Parents and Children: An Alternative to Selfless and Unconditional Love. *Hypatia* 21 (1) 181-199

Murphy–Cowan T. and Stringer M. (2001) Religious Affiliation and Attitudes Toward the Use of Corporal Punishment in Northern Ireland. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*. 22 (1) 55-62.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (2010) *Policy Summary: Equal Protection for Children Under the Law on Assault*. NSPCC London.

Neale S. (1990) Questions of Genre. *Screen*. 31 (1)

Nelson K. (2003) Self and Social Functions: Individual Autobiographical Memory and Collective Narrative. *Memory*. 11 (2) 125-136.

Newell P. (2006) Corporal Punishment Beats a Retreat *Child Rights Information Network* 19 13-15

Nieuwenhuys O. (2008) the Ethics of Children's Rights. *Childhood*. 15 (4) 4-11

Nijhof G. (1997) "Response Work": Approaching answers to open interviews as readings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 168-187

Patton M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods 3rd Edition*. Sage. California.

- Nobes G. & Smith M. (1997), Physical punishment of children in two-parent families. *Clinical Child Psychology* 2, 271–281.

Nobes G, Smith M, Upton P & Heverin A (1999) Physical Punishment by Mothers and Fathers in British Homes. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 14. 887-902

Nutt K. (1999) *Smack Dad Wins Fight to Block Kids Order*. Daily Record. 3 July, p.10

O'Neill J. (1994) *The Missing Child in Liberal Theory*. University of Toronto Press. Toronto.

Paolucci E. O. and Violato C. 2004) A Meta Analysis of the Published Research on the Affective, Cognitive and Behavioural Effects of Corporal Punishment. *Journal of Psychology*. 138. 197-221.

Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 3rd Edition. Sage. London

Phares V. (1996) Conducting Non Sexist Research: Prevention and Treatment with Fathers and Mothers: A Call for Change. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 20. 55-77

Phillips R. (2000) Making too Much of the Available Data (letter) *British Medical Journal* 320 261-262

Polkinghorne D. E. (1988) *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. State University of New York Press, Albany.

Polkinghorne D.E. (1995). Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis. In Hatch, J.A. and Wisiewski R. (Eds) *Life History and Narrative*. Falmer Press. Washington

Powell C. (2002) There is No Such thing as 'A Good Smack'. *British Journal of Nursing*. 11 (22) 1425

Price J. (2000) Smacking and Verbal Abuse of Children by parents (letter) *British Medical Journal*. 320. 261-262

Prior L. (2006) *Using Documents in Social Research*. Sage. London.

Prout A. Ed. 2000. *The Body, Childhood and Society*. Macmillan Press Ltd

Propp V.I. (1968) *Morphology of the Folktale*. University of Texas Press. Texas.
Postman N. (1982) *The Disappearance of Childhood*. Comet. London.

Qvortrup J. (1994) Introduction in Qvortrup J., Bardy M., & Wintersberger H. (Eds) *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. Avebury Aldershot.

Qvortrup J. (1997) A Voice for Children in Statistical and Social Accounting: A Plan for Children's Rights to be Heard. In James A and Prout A (Eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. Falmer Press. London.

Rapport N. & Overing J. (2000) *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*. Routledge. London.

Regaldo M. Sareen S. Inkelas M. Wissow L & Halfon N (2004) Parents Discipline of Young Children: Results From the National Survey of early Child Health. *Pediatrics* 113 (6) 1952-1958.

Reilly M. (1999) *Voice of Scotland (letter)* Daily Record, 31 May, p29

Reissman C.K. (1993) *Narrative Analysis: Qualitative Research Methods Series* 30. Sage Publications. London.

Reissman C.K. (2002) Analysis of Personal Narratives. In Holstein J.A. & Gubrium J.F. (Eds.) *Handbook of Interview Research*. Sage. Thousand Oaks. CA.

Reissman C.K. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Sage. Thousand Oaks. CA.

Rhoner R.P., Kean K.J. & Cournoyer D.E. (1991) Effects of Corporal Punishment, Perceived Caretaker Warmth, and Cultural Beliefs on the Psychological Adjustment of Children in St Kitts, West Indies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 53 681-693

Ribbens McCarthy J, Edwards R & Gillies V. (2000) Moral Tales of the Child and Adult: Narratives of Contemporary Family Lives Under Changing Circumstances. *Sociology* 34. 785-796

- Ripoll-Núñez K.J. & Rohner R.P. (2006), Corporal Punishment in Cross Cultural Perspective: Directions for a Research Agenda. *Cross Cultural Research*. 40 (3) 220-249.

Roberts M.W. & Powers S.W. (1996) Adjusting Chair Timeout Enforcement Procedures for Oppositional Children *Behaviour Therapy* 21 257-271

- Roberts H. (2000), Smacking. *Child: Care, Health and Development* 26, 259–262.

Rodwell L. (1989) *Smacking – A Mothers Dilemma: How Should a Child Be Punished*. The Independent, London. 4 October. p 27

Rogers A.G., Casey M., Ekert J., Holland J., Nakkula V., & Sheinberg N. (1999) An Interpretive Poetics of the Languages of the Unsayable: Conceptions of the Said and Not Said. In Josselson R. & Lieblich A. Eds. *Making Meaning of Narrative: The Narrative Study of Lives. Volume 4*. Sage. Thousand Oaks CA.

Royal College of Nursing (2009) (www.rcn.org accessed on October 30th 2009).

Ryan G.W. & Russell Bernard H. (2000) Data Management and Analysis Methods in Denzin N. & Lincoln Y. Eds. (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2nd Edition. Sage. London, Thousand Oaks.

Sandelowski M. (1991) Telling Stories: Narrative Approaches in Qualitative Research. *Image. Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 23 (3) 161-166

Sandelowski M. (1995) Sample Size in Qualitative Research. *Research in Nursing and Health*. 18. 179-183.

Sandelowski M, & Barroso J, (2003) Classifying the Findings in Qualitative Studies. *Qualitative Health Research*. 13 (7) 905-923.

Sanders M.R., Markie-Dadds C., Turner K.M.T. & Breckman-Toussaint M. (2000) *Triple P-Positive Parenting Programme: A Guide to the System*. Families International Publishing. Brisbane. QLD

Sanders M.R. & Turner M.T. (2005) Reflections on the Challenges of Effective Dissemination of Behavioural Family Intervention: Our Experience With the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 10 (4) 158-169

Sarantakos S. (2005) *Social Research*. 3rd edition. Palgrave Macmillan. London

Sarbin T.R. (1986) The Narrative as the Root Metaphor for Psychology, in Sarbin T.R. (ed) *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*. Praeger. New York

Saunders B J. and Goddard C (2001) The Textual Abuse of Childhood in the English-Speaking World: the Contribution of Language to the Denial of Children's Rights. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*. 8. 443-462.

Saunders B J, and Goddard C. (2008), Some Australian Children's Perceptions of Physical Punishment in Childhood. *Children and Society*. 22. 405-417

Saussure F. (1960) *Course in General Linguistics*. In King M. & Watson K. (2005) *Representing Health: Discourses of Health and Illness in the Media*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke

Scottish Executive (2002) *Criminal Justice Bill (Scotland): Children*. Scottish Executive. Edinburgh,

Scottish Executive. (2003) *The Criminal Justice Scotland Act*. Scottish Executive. Edinburgh.

Scottish Government (2007) *Better Health Better Care*. Scottish Government. Edinburgh

Scottish Government (2008) *A Guide to Getting it Right For Every Child*. Scottish Government. Edinburgh

- Scholes K. (1999), Smacking Can Be An Act of Love (letter). *Nursing Times* 95(30), 19.

Schultz, W.T.(2001) De Profundis: Prison as a Turning Point in Oscar Wilde's Life Story, in McAdams, D.P. Josselson, R. and Lieblich, A. Eds. (2001) *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition*. American Psychological Association. Washington, DC

Schumacher K. & Meleis A. (1994) Transitions: A Central Concept in Nursing. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. 126 (2) 119-127.

Seale C. (2000) Changing Patterns of Death and Dying *Social Science and Medicine* 51 (6) 917-930

Seale C. (2002) *Media and Health*. Sage. London.

Seale C Ed. 2004 *Social Research Methods a Reader*. Routledge

Sebba L. (2005) Child Protection or Child Liberation? Reflections on the Movement to Ban Physical Punishment by Parents and Educators. *International Review of Victimology*. 12. 159-187

Sfard A. & Prusak A. (2005) Telling Identities: In Search of an Analytic Tool for Investigating Learning as a Culturally Shaped Activity. *Educational Researcher*. 34 (4) 14-22.

Shields L., Kristensson-Hallsröm I., Kristjánsdóttir G., and Hunter J. (2003) Who Owns the Child in Hospital? A Preliminary Discussion. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 41 (3) 213-222.

Shilling C. (1993) *The Body and Social Theory*. Sage. London.

Shore. B. (1993) Twice-born, Once Conceived: Meaning Construction and Cultural Cognition. *American Journal of Anthropology*. 89. 9-27

Sidebotham P. (2001) An Ecological Approach to Child Abuse: A Creative Use of Scientific Models in Research and Practice. *Child Abuse Review*. 10. 97-112.

Sidebotham P. (2001) Culture, Stress and the Parent-Child Relationship: A Qualitative Study of Parents Perceptions of Parenting. *Child: Care, Health and Development*. 27 (6) 469-485

Silverstone R. (1994) *Television and Everyday Life*. Routledge. London.

Simons L. Lathlean J. & Squire C. (2008) Shifting the Focus: Sequential Methods of Analysis With Qualitative Data. *Qualitative Health Research* 18 (1) 120-132

Smetana J.G. (1997) Parenting and the Development of Social Knowledge Reconceptualised: A Social Domain Analysis in Grusec J. (Ed) *Parenting and Children's Internalisation of Values A Handbook of Contemporary theory* Wiley, NY

Sparks R., Girling E. & Smith M. (2002) Lessons From History: Pasts, Presents and Futures of Punishment in Children's Talk. *Children and Society*. (16) 116-130

Spencer S. (2000) *Save the Children* The Guardian. London p. 8

Stafford A., Hill M., Laybourne A., & Walker M. (2003) Having a Say: Children and Young People Talk About Consultation. *Children and Society* 17 (5) 361-373

Stake R. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Sage. California.

Stanley L. (2008) Madness to the Method? Using a Narrative Methodology to Analyse Large-Scale Complex Social Phenomena. *Qualitative Research* 8 (3) 435-447

Straus M. (1994) *Beating the Devil Out of Them: Corporal Punishment by Parents and its Effects on Children* Lexington/Macmillan. Boston

Straus M. & Mathur A. K. (1996) Social Change and the Trends In Approval of Corporal Punishment by Parents 1968-1994. In Frehsee D., Horn W. and Busman K. (Eds) *Family Violence Against Children*. DeGruyter Berlin

Straus M & Paschal MJ (1998) Corporal Punishment by Mothers and Child's Cognitive Development: A Longitudinal Study. World Congress of Sociology, Montreal, Canada.

Straus M. & Stewart J.H. (1999) Corporal Punishment by American Parents: National Data on Prevalence, Chronicity, Severity and Duration in Relation to Child and Family characteristics. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*. 2 55-70.

Stewart-Brown S. (2006) Improving Parenting: The Why and the How. *Archives of Diseases in Childhood* 93 102-104

Such E. and Walker R. (2004) Being Responsible and Responsible Beings: Children's Understandings of Responsibility. *Children and Society*. 18. 231-242

Tajima E. (2002) Risk Factors for Violence against Children. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 17 (2) 122-149

Taylor B. (1999) Parental Autonomy and Consent to Treatment. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 29 570-576

- Taylor J and Baldwin N. (2000), Social, Economic and Political Context of Parenting. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. 82. 113-120.

Taylor J. and Redman S (2004) The Smacking Controversy: What Advice Should We Be Giving Parents? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. . 46 (3), 311-318

Thomas-MacLean R. (2004) Understanding Breast Cancer Stories Via Frank's Narrative Types *Social Science and Medicine* 58, 1647-1657

Thomson M., Ellis R. and Wildavsky A. (1990) *Cultural Theory*. Boulder. CO. Westview.

Thompson A. and Pearce J. (2001) Attitudes Towards the Practice of Discipline Amongst Parents of Pre-School Children in Nottingham. *Children and Society*. 15. 231-236.

Thorpe D. (2004) *The Big Issue (letter)* The Sun, 14 July.

Tilly C. (1984) *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. Russell Sage. New York.

Torring J. (1999) *New Theories of Discourse*. Blackwell. Oxford.

Travers M. (2001) *Qualitative Research Through Case Studies*. Sage. London

Turner H. and Finkelhor D. (1996) Corporal Punishment as a Stressor Among Youth. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 58. 155-166.

Turney D. (1997) Hearing Voices, Talking Difference: A Dialogic Approach to Anti-Opressive Practice. *Journal of Social Work Practice* 11 (2) 115-125.

United Nations (1989) *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations New York

Vulliamy C. and Croxley A. (2002) *Listen Up*. Save the Children. Wales.

- Wadeson B. (1993), Smacking of harsh reality. *Nursing Standard* 7, 49–51.

Walker W. (1994) *The Big Debate*. Daily Record. 15 December, p44

- Waterston T. (2000), Giving Guidance on Child Discipline. *British Medical Journal*. 360, 261–262.

Watson C. (2006) Unreliable Narrators? 'Inconsistency' (and some inconstancy) in Interviews. *Qualitative Research*. 6, 367-384.

-

- Webb E. (2000), Prove Smacking Does No Harm (letter). *British Medical Journal*. 320, 1538.

Wheaton B. & Gotlib I. (1997) Trajectories and Turning Points over the Life Course: Concepts and Themes. In Gotlib I. & Wheaton B. (Eds) *Stress and Adversity over the Life course: Trajectories and Turning Points*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

- Whitaker K. & Cowley S. (2003), Parenting Support: Where Does it Fit With Health Roles? *Community Practitioner* 76(3), 100–103.

Whitehead R.E. & Douglas H. (2005) Health Visitor's Experiences of Using the Solihull Approach *Community Practitioner* 78 (1) 20-23

- Willow C. & Hyder T. (1998), *It Hurts You Inside: Children Talking about Smacking*. NCB/SCF, London.
-

Wolcott H. F. (1990) *Writing up Qualitative Research*. Sage. London

Wolcott H. F. (1994) *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis and Interpretation*. Sage. Thousand Oaks. CA

Woolf V. (1955) *To The Lighthouse*. Harcourt. NY

Wyness M. (2006) *Children and Society: An Introduction to the Sociology of Childhood*. Palgrave. London.

Yin, R. K. (1989) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London, Sage

Yonge O. & Stewin L. (1988) Reliability and Validity: Misnomers for Qualitative Research. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research* 20 61-67.

Watkins D & Cousins J (2005) Child Physical Punishment, Injury and Abuse (part two) *Community Practitioner* 78 (9) 318-321

Whiting L and Whiting M. (2004) Smacking: A Family Perspective. *Paediatric Nursing* 16 (8) 26-27.

NURSING AND HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

The smacking controversy: what advice should we be giving parents?

Julie Taylor BSc MSc PhD RGN ULTM

Director of Postgraduate Studies, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

Susan Redman BSc MSc RGN DipHV

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Dundee, Kirkcaldy, UK

Submitted for publication 18 March 2003

Accepted for publication 24 September 2003

Correspondence:

Julie Taylor,

School of Nursing and Midwifery,

11 Airlie Place,

University of Dundee,

Dundee DD1 4UJ,

UK.

E-mail: j.taylor@dundee.ac.uk

TAYLOR J. & REDMAN S. (2004) *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 46(3), 311–318
The smacking controversy: what advice should we be giving parents?

Background. Even among countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child there is much disagreement about corporal punishment of children. Last year the Scottish Executive proposed a new law banning the smacking of children under the age of three, becoming the tenth European nation to do so. The proposal, currently abandoned whilst ostensibly still under debate, has raised a wave of controversy in child protection circles. In the nearest neighbouring country, England, a similar proposal was robustly rejected.

Purpose of the paper. Given an increasing family and community focus in nursing, the implications of the debate for the profession cannot be ignored. What should we be telling 'ordinary' families about smacking? Thus this paper presents a positional statement on the smacking controversy and outlines some pointers for practice.

Discussion. While for many the legislation proposed does not go far enough, others decry it as a breach of parental rights and, thus, the issue has become hugely controversial. Media opinion and various opposing campaigns dominate both public and professional spheres. Rights, responsibilities, examples from other countries, culture and gender are all used as fodder in the debate. Extreme examples are cited by both sides and used as grist for what are sometimes unconvincing arguments. As there is even a division within child protection agencies, practising professionals may struggle to find a way through the maze of seemingly contradictory findings from research, policy and opinion.

Conclusions. A wide range of literature suggests that both public and professional opinion is divided on the use of smacking as a form of discipline of young children. Opinion is also divided on the ability of legislation to bring about change in social attitudes and behaviour. Health care professionals need to be in a position to recommend best practice and to do so consistently.

Keywords: smacking, corporal punishment, human rights, parents, health visiting, nursing

Introduction

Prompted by contemporary legislative proposals to change the law on corporal punishment of children in Scotland, tides of debate on the topic have swept through not only child protection circles, but also professional, media and lay audiences. This is a topic on which everyone has an opinion

and, reflecting such diversity, it is likely that nurses and midwives are divided on the issue. Given that branches of the profession interact frequently with parents who are seeking clear advice, what are the messages that we should be conveying? The United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child discourages corporal punishment, yet many ratifying countries allow it by law. In view of this

J. Taylor and S. Redman

paradox, what advice should health visitors give? Adding further to the mix are the personally held beliefs and values of the advising professional. Moreover, we know that we need to base our judgements and advice on the evidence, even if this is sometimes ahead of current legislation.

This paper is not directed at the gross physical abuse of children. Rather it is concerned with the smack that is often part and parcel of parental discipline and behaviour. In a Scottish survey (Scottish Law Commission 1992) 83% of respondents thought that it should be lawful to smack a naughty 3-year-old with an open hand in such a way as not to cause lasting injury. Additional data relating to smacking older children also demonstrated that the majority of parents believed that smacking should be lawful (Scottish Executive 2000).

Implications for the profession and, thus, the impetus for this paper are twofold. It is always difficult to give advice that is contrary to one's personal belief system, as measles mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations have shown (Bedford *et al.* 2002). By opening a debate within a specific nursing arena, both sides of the argument can be aired and individual practitioners can form their own opinions. Examining one's own value base is a crucial part of the process. Advice that is given to parents can then be based on professional evidence rather than necessarily on personal inheritance and socialization.

In order to meet these aims, this paper starts with the contextual situation regarding corporal punishment of children. Proposals to ban smacking are then examined from the viewpoint of those who think that such an idea is a bridge too far, as well as from the perspective of those who do not think such proposals are far-reaching enough. Whilst such arguments have been well-rehearsed elsewhere (see, for example, Waterston 2000, Save the Children 2001, NSPCC 2002, Straus 2002, Benjet & Kazdin 2003), they have received relatively little attention in nursing. The implications of this are considered in a later section of the paper. Although we attempt to give a balanced view, it is only fair that we declare our position from the start. It is acknowledged that whilst most parents would never harm their children, sometimes things can go wrong. We believe that, in order to protect children effectively we need to give clear advice. As parenting is now a political issue, it would be useful to have a consistent line for health professionals to follow (Waterston 2000).

The context

Having an interest in the topic, we began by asking groups of health visitors, social workers, general practitioners, midwives and school nurses what they thought ($n = c. 200$).

Whilst we cannot claim that this was a rigorous empirical study, these focused accounts suggested that the large majority of such professionals saw little wrong with a 'gentle' smack to a child, either as a corrective or warning device or, sometimes, as punishment. Furthermore, younger professionals (i.e. those more likely to be raising young children) were more inclined to approve of parental corporal punishment than those who were older. Moreover, it appeared that older parents had changed their views. While they may have hit their own children, as practising health visitors (for example), they no longer condoned smacking as a legitimate parental practice. Although interesting, such accounts do not constitute evidence. They do, however, reflect the two sides of the debate.

Most British parents, about 75%, use physical discipline on their children (Nobes & Smith 1997). A poll in the United States of America (USA) similarly found that some 89% of parents smack their children regularly (Gallup Organization 1995). Indeed, worldwide, it is probably reasonably common. In 1993, Judge Ian McLean commented: 'if a parent cannot slipper a child, the world is going potty' (Boseley 1999, p. 2) and allowed the appeal of a woman convicted of common assault for spanking her daughter's bare bottom. More recently, a primary school teacher spanked his daughter's bare buttocks in a dentist's waiting room. He was still hitting her when she ran and hid behind a member of staff. He was found guilty of assault at Hamilton Sheriff Court (Boseley 1999). There was public outrage, reflecting surveys that show that 88% of respondents thought it necessary sometimes to smack a naughty child (Department of Health 2000). It sometimes seems that hitting animals is less acceptable than hitting children (Roberts 2000) and emotive language is often used:

Practically everyone wants greater protection for foxes than for children, as that is the British Way. (Chancellor 2000, p. 6)

Current law in the United Kingdom (UK) is based on the principle of 'reasonable chastisement' and has been challenged in the European courts. In the 1998 case of *A versus UK* (repeated beating of a young boy by his stepfather with a garden cane) the European Court of Human Rights stated that UK law did not adequately protect children. The court found that this treatment was inhuman and degrading and was in breach of the boy's human rights (Scottish Executive 2000).

Despite such cases, and growing opposition to the notion of physical punishment of children, recent reviews and consultations on this issue in the UK have rejected any call for a change in proposals. Most would agree, however, that rewarding good behaviour is probably better than punishing

bad. Consultation on the issue in England and Wales during 2000 did not change the status quo on corporal punishment of children (Department of Health 2000). Scotland went a little further, making moderate proposals to make it illegal to hit or shake a child under three and to hit a child of any age on the head or with implements (such as canes and belts). However, none of the UK countries have proposed an outright ban in the way that Sweden did in 1979. Despite extremely positive evaluations of the impact of this ban, based on many child protection indicators (Durrant 1997, Durrant 2000, Save the Children Sweden 2002), it seems unlikely that the UK will follow suit. Even Scotland has reneged on earlier proposals and cannot find consensus on the ban.

Support to parents has been the cornerstone of health visitor activity (Whitaker and Cowley 2003) and, as such, there may be a need to establish a professional position as regards smacking. This could be seen as twofold: first in advocating professional support for the introduction of legislation and second, crucially, in terms of the quality of advice and information used to support parents. Appropriate parenting involves setting clear boundaries for children and responding appropriately to their behaviour; indeed, it could be seen as neglectful to do otherwise. On the other hand, discipline that is too harsh can be both emotionally and physically damaging (Scottish Executive 2000). What is crucial, and often overlooked, is that proposals to ban smacking are not proposals to stop discipline or 'reasonable chastisement' of children. Smacking children, as shown in the courts, is first and foremost a human rights issue (Roberts 2000).

A bridge too far?

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death. (Proverbs 23: 14)

There are many who suggest that banning corporal punishment is going too far. In the Scottish consultations, Jim Wallace echoed a popular view by stating that outlawing physical punishment would be intrusive and incompatible with the government's aim of helping parents in their role (Scottish Executive 2000). Surveys show that most people support the right of parents to smack their children (Department of Health 2000) and they do not want undue interference from government or to have values imposed on them (Fry 2000).

Equally, there are concerns that such a ban would lead to a lowering of standards. Independent schools, for example, say that since the ban was introduced in state schools standards

have plummeted and there has been an increase in classroom violence (Branigan 2001). In 2001, in the UK, the Christian Independent Schools asked the High Court for the right, as part of their Christian doctrine, to smack children on biblical grounds. Banning corporal punishment, they argued, is a breach of human rights to practice religious freedom (Branigan 2001).

It is true that many people become offended at the suggestion that they should not smack their children. Dr John Campion, spokesperson for Family and Youth Concern, is quoted as saying:

It is outrageous arrogance to say that I, a PhD in psychology and a good father, am committing an offence for an innocuous smack. (Thomas 1999, p. 9)

There is support for this kind of view within the nursing profession; smacking is described as 'an act of love' (Scholes 1999), and laws that discourage people from hitting are accused of racial, gender and class bias (Wadeson 1993). Authors writing from a medical perspective highlight the disruption caused in public places by children who are not disciplined adequately (Duff 2000, Philips 2000) and, indeed, point out that smacking provides a structured outlet for parental anger, acting as a 'safety valve' (Alcorn 2000). Inhibiting smacking is, thus, seen as having the potential to encourage other more harmful sorts of parental behaviour (Price 2000).

Those who argue that proposals to legislate against smacking are a bridge too far make the case that ordinary physical punishment is not actually harmful to children (Larzelere 1996, Baumrind *et al.* 2002). Moreover, it is suggested that the evidence to support such a ban is very weak (Larzelere 2000; Philips 2000). A smack is rarely a wild assault, resulting in actual bodily or psychological damage. Arguably, a smack and 'moving on' is less damaging than the 'withdrawal of love' approach sometimes favoured by those who reject physical punishment (Larzelere 1996).

Thus, the main arguments propounded are: firstly, that there are no adverse effects to smacking as a consistent and measured strategy for discipline; secondly, that alternative measures simply do not work. As such, should legislators seek to deskill parents by overturning the concept of 'reasonable response'?

Not far enough?

For every person who sees a ban on physical discipline as an infringement of parental freedom, there are others who are concerned that proposals to ban corporal punishment of children do not go far enough.

J. Taylor and S. Redman

The main argument for advising strongly against smacking is based on the issue of human rights of the child. For proponents it seems unbelievable that the smallest and weakest members of societies are the only ones not fully protected by law. Should we recommend something that we would not apply to another age group? (Waterston 2000).

Even in the recent past, physical punishment was a widespread, and hence accepted, phenomenon. Twenty years ago society would have ignored a woman being hit by her partner, seeing it as the man's right to discipline his wife (Children are Unbeatable! Alliance 2000). The police were notably reluctant to get involved in domestic disputes. However, cultures change and domestic abuse is no longer viewed in the same way. In Sweden, 25 years of prohibition have resulted in only 6% of people under the age of 35 supporting smacking (Walker 2000). If the corporal punishment of children were banned, it is most likely that chaotic, uncontrolled smacking would still happen, but at least it would not be socially acceptable (Webb 2000).

If people are honest, smacking is very rarely carried out in any measured circumstances. Most parents either lose control when they smack, driven by frustration, or because they just do not know what else to do (Waterston 2000). Sometimes it is because they are unsure about the limits of 'reasonable chastisement' (Lyon 2000). In this view, smacking is neither effective nor safe (Spencer 2000). Moreover, government surveys have so far sought the views of parents but have omitted to do the same with children, and, therefore, it might be claimed that they have misread the full range of public opinion (Children are Unbeatable! Alliance 2000). Research for the Children's Bureau, which asked children what they thought, showed not just that children did not want to be hit because it hurt (as one would expect), but that it 'hurt deep inside' (Willow and Hyder 1998, p. 3).

Furthermore, in terms of behavioural effects, countries where smacking is banned are not overrun with sociopathic youngsters (Roberts 2000). The Swedish experience is salutary. During the 1980s, no Swedish child died as a result of physical abuse, only one was killed by parental hands in the period 1990–1996, and the number of children coming into care has decreased by 26% since 1982 (Durrant 2000). Compare this with Scotland's figures (and make proportionate

estimates for the whole UK), where 10 children died as a result of homicide in the year 2000 alone and the percentage of children subject to care and protection referrals increased by 238% between 1989 and 2000 (Scottish Executive 2000). In Britain as a whole, one to two children die every week from physical injuries inflicted by an adult (Chancellor 2000). The differences in Swedish and Scottish figures are illustrated in Table 1.

Additionally, while there is a widespread belief that little harm results from physical punishment, such claims are, arguably, dangerous to both policy and practice (Roberts 2000). Many would argue that there is substantial evidence of the harmful effects of smacking (Leach 1999; Gershoff 2002a, 2002b). The intricacies of argument and counterargument were recently rehearsed in the *Psychological Bulletin* (Baumrind *et al.* 2002, Gershoff 2002a, 2002b, Holden 2002) and leave little doubt of the scale of evidence for harmful effects. Indeed most studies show that violence inevitably leads to more violence (Children are Unbeatable! Alliance 2000). Interestingly, in most interventions the onus is on proof of not being harmful rather than to the contrary. Whilst most would probably agree that occasional and mild smacking does no harm, as professionals advising parents it is important to know where to draw the line.

What advice should we be giving parents?

The whole notion of parenting has moved from the private arena of the family into one that features regularly in the political domain. While there might be agreement within families and among health care professionals that disruptive child behaviour needs to be dealt with, there is need for a consistent line from health care professionals on smacking and the alternatives (Waterston 2000).

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of literature about what health care professionals such as health visitors actually do in working with and empowering parents to use alternatives to smacking. For example, parenting classes remain a popular and arguably successful tool for parents (Hoghughli & Speight 1998; Patterson *et al.* 2002; Spencer 2000), but it is difficult to find explicit directives about health professionals' position on smacking. In fact, it is not so long ago that one of

Year 2001	Sweden	Scotland
Child deaths due to homicide (almost always by a parent)	0	10
Child deaths due to homicide in the last 20 years	1	200
Percentage increase/decrease in numbers of children coming into care in the last 20 years	26% decrease	238% increase

Table 1 Sweden and Scotland: some comparative data on child deaths/protection

us encountered parents who viewed health visitors as a positive aid to their disciplinary regime, and who told their children that 'the health visitor will smack you when she visits'. Whilst remembering this with horror, we have to acknowledge that there is a recent legacy of this attitude in the way that health visitor roles are both perceived and played out. Should the health visitor be a tool used to promote strict physical discipline?

The attitudes of health care professionals such as health visitors, school nurses and paediatricians on the issue of smacking children for disciplinary purposes are varied (Gleeson 2002). This is hardly surprising since, as members of the public, they too have been subject to the influences of socialization within contemporary society and have interpreted their own experiences as children and/or parents. A range of issues about smacking has been raised in the nursing and medical literature in recent years, and does seem to indicate that health care professionals are as divided and as inconsistent in their views as the general public. What seems to be missing in the nursing literature, however, is any sustained debate, or direction at anything more than a superficial level.

Where there is engagement in the debate, it seems that there is concern among some health visitors that action to prevent children being smacked might undermine their relationship with the family (Cottam 2000). Moves to end smacking as a form of child discipline might be seen as an unwelcome intrusion into family life. To help and empower families, Cottam argues the importance of developing a professional relationship based on mutual trust and non-judgemental interaction. Rather than imposing personal beliefs on a family, which may undermine parental decision-making, it is more important for the health visitor to support the preferred method of child discipline, while putting the well-being of the child first (Cottam 2000). Whilst these ideas are altruistic, the notion of support is not made explicit and a number of questions can be posed, such as: What exactly might this 'support' entail? and How effective is health visitor intervention and how might this be assessed? It is extremely important that health visitors provide and assess outcomes in their practice (Elkan *et al.* 2000) and Cottam's somewhat vague notion of what health visitors provide is not particularly helpful. It is not clear how the well-being of the child can be of paramount importance when, at the same time, smacking can be condoned if the health visitor feels it is both reasonable and justified by the circumstances. Thus, it could be asked: Does smacking undermine the rights of the child? If so, Does this affect the child's well-being?

A contrasting perspective on smacking, held by some health visitors, suggests that it is the moral duty of health

visitors to safeguard the interests of vulnerable clients (Bidmead & Cottam 2000). Since, they argue, smacking is an abuse of adults' power, it is part of the nurse's role to act as an advocate for the disempowered and, thus, smacking has to be opposed. From Bidmead and Cottam's perspective, children are considered to have the same rights as adults with regard to freedom from physical violence. This view is supported by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989), which states that traditional practices that are detrimental to the health of children should be abolished. Smacking is included in the Convention as being prejudicial to the health of the child, because it represents a parental role model that conveys to the child that hitting is an appropriate way to express negative feelings (Bidmead & Cottam 2000). Nonetheless, parents who use corporal punishment to discipline their children are not all abusers; neither do health care professionals have a monopoly on wisdom or behavioural insights.

The debate in health care arenas distills the issue further and has two main elements. First, whether or not it is morally or ethically right to use smacking as a form of discipline; and, second, the related question of whether the use of legislation to outlaw smacking is appropriate. The relative positions taken by health care professionals on these issues are illuminative.

The Children are Unbeatable! Alliance is comprised of over 220 organizations, including five royal colleges and a raft of children's organizations, and campaigns for the ending of corporal punishment to children (Children are Unbeatable! Alliance 2000):

We believe it is both wrong and impracticable to seek to define acceptable forms of corporal punishment of children. Such an exercise is unjust. Hitting children is a lesson in bad behaviour. (Children are Unbeatable! Alliance 2000, p. 22)

The Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA) has an anti-smacking policy and supports the introduction of legislation to ban this behaviour (CPHVA 2001). The CPHVA are signatories to the Children are Unbeatable! Alliance and feel that the government, in their consultation paper, *Protecting Children, Supporting Parents* (Department of Health 2000) have missed an opportunity to outlaw smacking once and for all, in their attempt to balance child protection with parental rights to bring up their children as they think best without state interference. The Royal College of Midwives is also a supporter of the Alliance's aims. The Health Select Committee's (2003) Report on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry is stark in its recommendations: make smacking illegal to protect children from abuse.

J. Taylor and S. Redman

On the other hand there are agencies, such as the Royal College of Nursing Child Protection Forum, that do not favour the use of legislation as a means of changing societal attitudes towards smacking children. The CPHVA (2001) emphasises the anomaly of creating legislation, which according to the Children are Unbeatable! Alliance, is not likely to be implemented by the majority of parents who use non-injurious smacking as a form of discipline. They argue, therefore, that such legislation is unlikely to result in a change in the practice of health care professionals. However, some health visitors are concerned that, if legislation outlaws smacking, they will be required to contact the police should they witness it, and that the consequences of this may prove to be more injurious to the child than the smack (Gulland 1999).

There is a clear paradox in the line that our professional bodies take and it is, therefore, not surprising that this is echoed in the apparent confusion of practising professionals. It is always useful to seek guidance from advisory bodies and, thus, not giving out clear messages is unhelpful. For those health care and child care agencies that believe that there should be an end to the smacking of children (and there are many of them), there is clearly an enormous task ahead if public opinion is to be changed. However, this is not impossible; the Swedes did it by using promotional material on milk bottles (Save the Children Sweden 2002).

In the UK, we love our children yet sanction violence against them (Walker 2000). Children's rights always proceed slowly; it took until 1986 to stop physical punishment in schools in the UK. Most Western countries prohibit corporal punishment in school. Exceptions are the USA (although it is banned in 27 states), Canada and some states in Australia (Branigan 2001). Children are protected by law from corporal punishment, both at school and in the home, in 10 countries. However, schools in the UK have argued that such a ban is illogical because parents are legally allowed to delegate their right to discipline their children physically to other adults, such as childminders (Branigan 2001). It is probable that a change in the law alone (even if this were forthcoming) is not enough to change the public's views on the use of smacking to control undesirable child behaviour. A wide-ranging public health approach to effective discipline is also required (Waterston 2000). Those agencies which support the use of legislation to bring about changes in societal attitudes point to the law that enforced the use of car seat belts as a successful example of bringing about not only behavioural change, but also transformation in public opinion.

Wadeson (1993) and Hain (2000) argue that, because most parents smack as a last resort when they have lost control rather than as a planned, consistent strategy for discipline, changes to

legislation that make smacking illegal are unlikely to be effective. This is a crucial point and one that underpins the role of health care professionals who work with families and communities. These are the very professionals who are pivotal in helping to bring about changes in attitudes towards smacking through public health intervention or, at the individual level, in enabling and educating parents about positive and workable alternatives. Gleeson (2002) suggests that paediatric nurses, health visitors and school nurses are ideally placed to give such guidance to parents as a key component of their professional education is about placing childhood behaviours within the context of child development.

Conclusion

There are still many gaps in our knowledge about the potentially harmful effects of smacking on children. There is also a long way to go before we can be sure that the interventions we use with parents and children are effective (Elkan *et al.* 2000, Spencer 2000). However, we have a duty of care to children that means that all our advice and action should be based on protecting them from harm. As health care professionals, we need to provide consistent advice and base practice on what is best for children. Consistency in advice and public health promotion may influence public perceptions and, consequently, impact on legislation. The forthcoming UK Green Paper (government consultative document) on children at risk provides an ideal opportunity to comment.

Since the evidence against smacking appears to outweigh evidence to the contrary, the implications for health care professionals who are committed to evidence-based practice are fairly obvious: when working with families and communities, advice should be concentrated on developing interventions that empower parents to choose not to smack by helping them to develop effective strategies for dealing with stress and by raising self-esteem (Smith 2003).

The evidence suggests that smacking is detrimental to child health and well-being and, in some cases, may be a catalyst for progressive abuse. It can, therefore, be argued that, although health and social care professionals have personal beliefs and attitudes about the use of smacking, it is both unprofessional and perhaps even unethical to allow these personal beliefs to influence practice. The logical inference is that, by giving inconsistent advice to parents about the use of smacking, health care professionals may inadvertently be contributing to the unacceptably high level of child abuse in the UK.

The originator of the term 'battered baby syndrome', Henry Kempe, 'may have been wrong when he suggested that child abuse is the difference between a smack on the bottom

What is already known about this topic

- Professional and public opinion about corporal punishment of children is diverse.
- There is agreement that child behaviour can cause difficulties within home and school environments.
- More than 75% of parents in the United States of America and United Kingdom apparently use physical discipline with their children.
- There is little empirical evidence on the views of health care professionals about the use of smacking by parents.

What this paper adds

- This position paper debates controversial issues about the use of legislation to bring about change in social attitudes towards smacking.
- It raises some of the issues presented by both supporters of smacking as a form of child discipline and those who are opposed to it.
- It begins to redress the imbalance between the scant attention paid to the issue in the nursing literature and its great relevance to all who deal with parents and children.
- It identifies a need for consistent guidelines for health and social care professionals when advising parents about alternatives to smacking.

and a fist in the face. They may simply be different parts of the same distribution' (Roberts 2000 p. 262).

References

- Alcorn G.B. (2000) 'Safety valve' effect of spanking (letter). *BMJ* 320, 261–262.
- Baumrind D., Larzelere R.E. & Cowan P.A. (2002) Ordinary physical punishment: Is it harmful? Comment of Gershoff (2002). *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 580–589.
- Bedford H., Moreton J. & Elliman D. (2002) MMR vaccine: are health professionals missing the point? *Community Practitioner* 75, 100–104.
- Benjet C. & Kazdin A.E. (2003) Spanking children: the controversies, findings and new directions. *Clinical Psychology Review* 23, 197–224.
- Bidmead C. & Cottam D. (2000) Debate. Do community nurses and health visitors have a moral duty to help end smacking? *Nursing Times* 96, 18.
- Boseley S. (1999) *Crime and Punishment*. The Guardian, London, 21 May, p. 2.
- Branigan T. (2001) *Christian Schools Ask for Right to Hit Pupils*. The Guardian, London, 3 November, p. 2.
- Chancellor A. (2000) *Hit the Kids – But Don't Smack the Pony*. The Guardian, London, 22 January, p. 6.
- Children are Unbeatable! Alliance (2000) *Moving on From Smacking*. NSPCC, London.
- Cottam D. (2000) Do community nurses and health visitors have a moral duty to help end smacking? *Nursing Times* 96, 18.
- CPHVA (2001) *Physical Punishment of Children: A Consultation [Online]*. Available at: <http://www.msfcphva.org/cphvaresponses/resscosmacking.htm>. Access date: 03.02.03.
- Department of Health (2000) *Protecting Children, Supporting Parents. A Consultation Document on the Physical Punishment of Children*. DoH, London.
- Duff P. (2000) Non-violent discipline (letter). *BMJ* 320, 261–262.
- Durrant J.E. (1997) *The Status of Swedish Children and Youth Since the Passage of the 1979 Corporal Punishment Ban*. Save the Children, London.
- Durrant J. (2000) *The Status of Swedish Children and Youth Since the Passage of the 1979 Corporal Punishment Ban*. Save the Children Fund, London.
- Elkan R., Kendrick D., Hewitt M., Robinson J., Tolley K., Blair M., Dewey M., Williams D. & Brummell K. (2000) The effectiveness of domiciliary health visiting: a systematic review of international studies and a selective review of the British literature. *Health Technology Assessment* 4.
- Fry R. (2000) Parents must be in charge of their children (letter). *BMJ* 320, 1538.
- Gallup Organization (1995) *Disciplining Children in America: A Gallup Poll Report*. Gallup, Princeton, NJ.
- Gershoff E. (2002a) Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviors and experiences: a meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 539–579.
- Gershoff E. (2002b) Corporal punishment, physical abuse, and the burden of proof: Reply to Baumrind, Larzelere, and Cowan (2002), Holden (2002), and Parke (2002). *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 602–611.
- Gleeson C. (2002) Smacking – issues for nurses. *Primary Health Care* 12, 16–18.
- Gulland A. (1999) Break the smack habit. *Nursing Times* 95, p. 6.
- Hain R.D.W. (2000) Occasional smacking does no harm (letter). *BMJ* 320, 1538.
- Health Select Committee (2003) Response to the Laming Inquiry [Online]. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary-committees/healthcommittee>. Access date: 29.08.03.
- Hoghugh M. & Speight A.N.P. (1998) Good enough parenting for all children – a strategy for a healthier society. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 78, 293–300.
- Holden G. (2002) Perspectives on the effects of corporal punishment: punishment: comment on Gershoff (2002). *Psychological Bulletin* 128, 590–595.
- Larzelere R.E. (1996) A review of the outcomes of parental use of nonabusive or customary physical punishment. *Pediatrics* 98, 824–828.
- Larzelere R.E. (2000) Weak evidence for a smacking ban (letter). *BMJ* 320, 1538.
- Leach P. (1999) *The Physical Punishment of Children – Some Input from Recent Research*. NSPCC, London.
- Lyon C. (2000) *Loving Smack or Lawful Assault?* National Children's Bureau, London.

J. Taylor and S. Redman

- Nobes G. & Smith M. (1997) Physical punishment of children in two-parent families. *Clinical Child Psychology* 2, 271–281.
- NSPCC (2002) *Encouraging Better Behaviour: A Practical Guide to Positive Parenting*. NSPCC, London.
- Patterson J., Barlow J., Mockford C., Klimes I., Pyper C. & Stewart-Brown S. (2002) Improving mental health through parenting programmes: block randomised controlled trial. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 87, 472–477.
- Philips R. (2000) Making too much of the available data (letter). *BMJ*, 320, 261–262.
- Price J. (2000) Smacking and verbal abuse of children by parents (letter). *BMJ* 320 261–262.
- Roberts H. (2000) Smacking. *Child: Care, Health and Development* 26, 259–262.
- Save the Children (2001) *Ending Corporal Punishment of Children. Making it Happen*. The Save the Children Fund, London.
- Save the Children Sweden (2002) *The First Anti-Spanking Law in the World*. Save the Children, Stockholm.
- Scholes K. (1999) Smacking can be an act of love (letter). *Nursing Times* 95(30), 19.
- Scottish Executive (2000) *The Physical Punishment of Children in Scotland: A Consultation*. Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.
- Scottish Law Commission (1992) *Report on Family Law*. Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.
- Smith S. (2003) Is smacking abusive? Does it matter? *Community Practitioner* 76, 304–307.
- Spencer N. (2003) Parenting programmes. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 88(2), 99–100.
- Spencer S. (2000) *Save the children*. The Guardian, London, p. 8.
- Straus M. (2002) *What The World Might be Like if Adults Stopped Hitting Children*. 14th ISPCAN International Congress. Denver, Colorado.
- Thomas R. (1999) Hitting by any other name hurts as much. *The Observer*, London, p. 9.
- United Nations (1989) *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations, New York.
- Wadeson B. (1993) Smacking of harsh reality. *Nursing Standard* 7, 49–51.
- Walker P. (2000) *Spare the Child*. The Guardian, London, p. 12.
- Waterston T. (2000) Giving guidance on child discipline. *BMJ* 320, 261–262.
- Webb E. (2000) Prove smacking does no harm (letter). *BMJ* 320, 1538.
- Whitaker K. & Cowley S. (2003) Parenting support: where does it fit with public health roles? *Community Practitioner* 76(3), 100–103.
- Willow C. & Hyder T. (1998) *It Hurts you Inside: Children Talking about Smacking*. NCB/SCF, London.

ERROR: stackunderflow
OFFENDING COMMAND: ~

STACK: